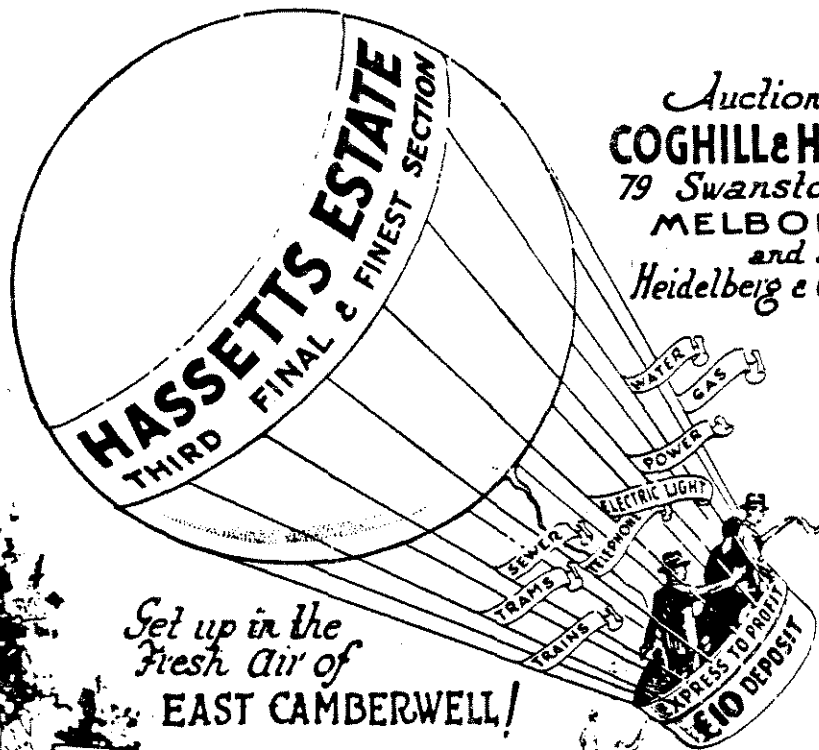


CAMBERWELL CONSERVATION STUDY

Volume Two

**SATURDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 1927**

*At 3 o'clock - in a Marquee - on the Estate*



*Auctioneers*  
**COGHILL & HAUGHTON**  
 79 Swanston Street,  
 MELBOURNE.  
 and at  
 Heidelberg & Canterbury.

*Set up in the  
 Fresh Air of  
 EAST CAMBERWELL!*

**64 GLORIOUS 64  
 HOME SITES  
 27 SHOP SITES 27**

*Get away  
 from the noise,  
 dust & grime  
 of the City!*

**HASSETTS ESTATE  
 EAST CAMBERWELL**

V o l u m e T w o  
**CAMBERWELL ENVIRONMENT HISTORY**

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■ **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This report has been prepared as a part of the City of Camberwell Conservation Study, 1989-1990. Work began in late August 1989 and was completed in early February 1990.

The report is the work of a Study Team comprising: Lesley Alves, Anita Brady, Sheryl Yelland and Chris McConville.

All members contributed to bibliographic and research work. The bulk of the research was the work of Lesley Alves and Anita Brady. Ms Sheryl Yelland wrote sections of the report dealing with "Domestic Life" and "Images of Camberwell" and did much of the research for illustrations as well as research in local oral history. Ms Lesley Alves provided biographies of key people and histories of key buildings. Ms Anita Brady worked on the history of the natural environment. Dr Chris McConville was responsible for the remainder of writing and editing. The report was produced by Chris McConville and Associates in February 1990.

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Many Camberwell residents assisted us in this work. We would like to thank especially the members of the various local historical societies and those who agreed to interviews. The staff of the Camberwell Library assisted us, with special assistance from Gwen McWilliam. Staff in the Urban Design section of the City of Camberwell were a great help to us. Special thanks to Colin Singleton.

The majority of photos appearing in this report are from the Local History Collection of the Camberwell Library.

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## Volume One

# PREFACE

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This *Environmental History* forms Part One of the City of Camberwell's Urban Conservation Study (1989-1990). Part Two of the Urban Conservation Study will identify buildings and areas of historical and architectural importance in Camberwell and provide guidelines for their management.

Urban conservation studies in Victoria emphasise history as well as architecture in identifying heritage sites. Buildings with historic interest are usually those which can be linked to important events or people; they can illustrate transitions in economic or social history or else represent important local or national events. Selecting significant buildings for any of these reasons depends in the first instance on a knowledge of their historical context.

This *Environmental History* seeks to provide such a context. It isolates key forces which have shaped the material world of Camberwell and establishes an historical framework within which individual structures or areas can be interpreted.

Camberwell is one amongst many Melbourne suburbs created in the final decades of the nineteenth century. More than others, Camberwell has maintained much of the calmness and order central to the ideal nineteenth-century suburb. This study is not intended as a comprehensive political or social history and the chapters which follow explore the material character of Camberwell. Where political or social change have altered the physical form of Camberwell then they find a place in this history. But the purpose of this study is to indicate the principal changes in the material environment of Camberwell over the last one hundred years. The emphasis falls on buildings and landscape, with particular interest in the suburb between the wars.

In trying to explain how Camberwell has come to have its present material form, land subdivision and street formation provide the underlying pattern. Housing and domestic lifestyles shape most of Camberwell. The nature of this housing cannot be understood without considering transport patterns and these are examined in some detail. Transport in turn has shaped commercial activity as well as housing and a part of the report looks at the pattern of retailing in Camberwell. Vegetation changed along with housing

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and this aspect of Camberwell's history is also explored. The history also deals with the most active local recreational groups and social networks; those which shaped parts of the suburb.

Finally, Camberwell residents themselves have their own way of identifying what is important in the suburb. The history deals with some of the personal perceptions which Camberwell residents have of their own suburb.

What follows is a brief environmental history of one Melbourne municipality; in the long run this history is intended as a guide towards interpreting and controlling the present buildings and spaces of the municipality.

Camberwell began as a suburb on the fringe of the city. This is no longer the case. The city has encircled the suburb and the pace of environmental change is perhaps as great as at any previous time in Camberwell's history. It is hoped that this report will provide a context in which the remnants of the past can be judged and understood, before present changes overwhelm them.

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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Few places portray the ideals of Australian suburban life as clearly as Camberwell. For better or worse, the suburb lies at the heart of Australian life, and Camberwell is the classic suburb. It has been populated by the middling and upper class social strata, living in detached single-family dwellings set amidst gardens and trees. Camberwell is tied to the city by public transport yet, apart from it, having successfully excluded the dirty, nasty and dangerous elements of urban life. Only churches and shops were welcomed as appropriate additions to its domestic landscape. More successfully than most other Australian municipalities, Camberwell has created the suburban ideal of country in the city and deliberately maintained this character for more than one hundred years.

All of the most desirable suburban characteristics of the period between 1860 and 1960 are expressed in the buildings and streets of Camberwell. Most importantly, Camberwell clearly displays the aspirations and the material forms of the suburban world created between the First and Second World Wars.

The historic significance of Camberwell lies in the quality, variety and completeness of the municipality's essentially suburban appearance. Individual buildings and areas within the suburb clearly register the key aspects of this suburban form. Most important amongst these are:

1. Large, often multi-storeyed mansions built prior to the railway boom of the 1880's and established with their own work force, gardens, orchards and livestock just beyond what was then the boundary of the Melbourne metropolitan area.
  2. Detached villas, often architect-designed, and built for upper-middle clients between 1880 and 1914. These are clustered around public transport routes, particularly the east-west railway link to the city.
  3. The estates of detached middle-class housing created between the wars essentially tied to fixed-rail electric transport. These houses include superior examples of the whole range of exotic and nostalgic styles which coloured Australian suburbia during the period.
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4. Modernist houses, especially prominent in the north of the suburb, often designed by architects and built for the new professional and managerial elite of the 1950s boom.
  5. The public space of the suburb includes important elements of public transport systems, especially the railways and tramways which were intrinsic to suburban development. This is especially true of the electric tramways of the inter-war era. Routes through Camberwell were often seen as test cases for the ability of electric trams and trains to promote suburban growth.
  6. Camberwell is shaped today by embryonic town planning attempts. These were carried out through (1) By-law planning which clustered shops into distinctive zones. (2) By-law controls over house sizes and materials. (3) Deliberate municipal policies designed to exclude industry, liquor outlets and cheap housing. (4) Post-war public housing schemes along deliberately and distinctively planned lines. (5) Within individual estates where streets deviated from the normal grid and where developers imposed set-backs, materials and relations between buildings to give individual cachet to each estate. (6) The constant efforts of local Progress Associations to win the best possible amenities for their part of the suburb.
  7. Camberwell historically had comparatively high rates of church attendance. This aspect of the suburb's history is reflected in the number and quantity of religious buildings, both churches and schools which have for a long time been landmarks within the municipality.
  8. Camberwell always took pride in its "natural" qualities. From the 1870s onwards, streets have been planted with a succession of street trees, first of all exotic and subsequently native. Councillors, council staff and local residents have fought for parks and gardens, both ornamental and recreational in the suburb. These natural elements set the seal on Camberwell's distinctive suburban quality.

Especially in the inter-war period, Camberwell boasted of its superior suburban qualities. Its buildings, public spaces, general lay-out and exclusion of unwanted activities all demonstrated the essence of suburbanism, the dominant characteristic of the most modern cities, in Australia and indeed in the remainder of the world.

Camberwell's estates were planned to a more lavish scale than in many other suburbs. Its developers made sure that public amenities measured up to the quality of its individual houses; these houses often expressed the best in contemporary style and as detached single-storeyed villas,

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they typified classic suburban form. The municipality successfully excluded unwanted activities and passed by-laws to maintain the desired suburban qualities. Street planting, parks and public transport were carefully protected and extended especially in the distinctively shaped Camberwell Junction area. The churches and schools made local landmarks.

In its estates of detached houses and in its public landscape Camberwell forcefully expresses Australia's history of suburban growth. It has been more successful than most other urban areas in preserving the suburban ideal, of the city in the country, especially as envisioned during the inter-war suburban boom. Sites and areas listed in this conservation study best express these important qualities.

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## Chapter One

# SHAPES ON THE GROUND

For almost half a century after the arrival of the first Europeans in 1835, Camberwell changed slowly. Fifteen years later, less than one hundred lived in what was to become Boroondara.<sup>1</sup> Some farmers occupied crown land along the creeks where they cut timber and ran stock. Others may have tenanted some of the land of Henry Elgar.

A former West Indian merchant, Elgar had bought up more than half of the present City of Camberwell. He managed to sell his purchase in the 1840s, and blocks were sub-divided and resold in the mid-1850s. The Victorian government sold land in the southern part of Camberwell in 1853. With the gold rushes of the 1850s some of Melbourne's leading figures decided to build suburban retreats on the eastern side of the Yarra. Lesser lights followed them, creating the rows of houses which make up most of modern Camberwell. Yet the suburb which we see today is, in the first instance, a product of land surveys, road networks and subdivisions

### Surveys

Camberwell, like other Melbourne suburbs, was first subdivided for farmland. Directed by Robert Hoddle, Thomas Nutt began a Crown Survey of the Parish of Boroondara, dividing much of the land into 150 allotments varying in size from 200 to ten acres. The smaller holdings were ideal for dairies and orchards, the larger for grazing land. Elgar's Special Survey was one amongst only a few huge purchases made under short-lived English land laws, regulations quickly revoked soon afterwards.<sup>2</sup> Bought in 1841, this holding extended over approximately eight square miles from the Koonung Creek to the line of today's Burke Rd in the west and Elgar Rd in the east. Today's Canterbury Rd formed the southern boundary.<sup>3</sup> Where land had been sold initially in portions of 189 acres, within a decade they were changing hands in lots of less than 10 acres. Camberwell seemed destined to be, at least for some time, a place of small farmers.<sup>4</sup> Not until the 1880s did much of this rural land attract suburban sub-dividers.

Government roadways were planned to give access to Crown allotments. Their general east-west pattern

survived to the twentieth century and they now form the geometrical pattern underlying the building and subdivision of the suburb.

### Roads

By 1861, after a decade of massive immigration, settlements sprang up on all sides of Melbourne. The present City of Camberwell straddles what were the tracks running eastwards from Melbourne to the small towns of Gippsland and the Yarra Valley. Tracks which once took travellers out from the city to the ranges and river valleys are now the main arteries of Camberwell and of more distant suburbs (the Main Gippsland Road for example has become Whitehorse Rd). Increased population and new settlements in the 1850s had drawn the fledgling Boroondara Road Board's attention to these routes and from 1860 onwards the Board made concerted yet frequently futile attempts to build better roads. In the north of Camberwell, the board tried to bridge Koonung Creek and carry Doncaster Rd into Templestowe and on to mining towns and the Upper Yarra Valley. Bulleen Rd, often washed away in gullies, ran along an even more capricious route. Whitehorse Rd supposedly carried the major traffic between Melbourne and the sparsely-settled hills of Gippsland. Canterbury or Delany's Rd skirted the southern edge of what had been Elgar's Special Survey. Riversdale Rd, known as Moloney's Rd, crossed rough log bridges, a ravine called Blood's Gully, sand wastes and the edge of a quarry before disappearing into thick bushland. Further south, Toorak Rd reached Gardiner's Creek (it was known for a time as the Gardiner's Creek Rd) and was there barred from bringing traffic into Camberwell by private land. From what is now its present intersection with Camberwell Rd, Toorak (Norwood) Rd followed a ridge to the village of Ballyshanassy and from there wandered in and out of forest. High St, the most southerly of Camberwell's main east-west highways was formerly known as the Middle Dandenong Rd. It forded Gardiner's Creek and then climbed up from the flood plain across an often muddy ridge through scrub and tee-tree.

As their confused and often changing names indicate, these roads had few permanent destinations. Towns

arose and disappeared quickly in gold-rush Victoria. So in place of an ephemeral terminus, travellers identified roads with publicans (like Delany) in whose inns they escaped from the muddy tracks and to whom they handed over toll fees. Beyond the 1850s local roads continued as rough and often impassable. They dropped into gullies; residents often dug them up for sand and the Road Board resorted to the primitive solution of filling dips with tee-tree branches or battling with neighbouring municipalities about the cost of bridges and repairs. Even when graded and straightened, the gradients of many roads which crossed Camberwell's creek valleys caused difficulties.<sup>5</sup>

Over the main north-south roadways, Camberwell, Hawthorn and Kew were constantly at loggerheads. Who would pay for Burke Road (the West Boundary Rd after the separation of the Boroondara Road District from Kew and Hawthorn)? Who ought to carry the cost of bridges over creeks? Burke Rd dropped into a gully sometimes twelve feet deep on its slow march north to Whitehorse Rd. Road Board members were regularly letting tenders for straightening routes, putting in footpaths, kerbing roads, filling holes and clearing tree stumps and occasionally fences and houses from all roads. But the north-south routes, without even the obscure destinations of Doncaster Rd or Whitehorse Rd, suffered most from neglect. Warrigal Rd not only had to cross Gardiner's Creek but also traversed a culvert dug by a landowner. This fellow insisted that he had title to the route of the road (he was persuaded otherwise when offered river frontage land after a debate in the Legislative Assembly).

Up until the 1880s, the principal effort of the local road board (and later shire council) went into shaping major roads. In 1873 council conducted repairs on Moloney's Rd, Bulleen Rd and Canterbury Rd and by 1880 at least the western sections of these roads were graded and straightened. Difficulties over Burke Rd continued for years, but by 1880, it too had become a passable country road. By 1889 the council had so improved principal roads in Camberwell that it began to asphalt intersections. In 1883 work had begun on making footpaths (the north side of Canterbury Rd) and then along Burke Rd near the railway station. Pitched crossings at Burke and Prospect Hill Rds, Camberwell and Avenue Rds and Riversdale Rd and Trafalgar St

appeared in 1889.<sup>6</sup> In 1902 one resident, George Gordon, could successfully claim compensation when his horse put his foot in a rabbit hole in a Camberwell main street. Yet, by 1911, the council, now in possession of a new £785 steam roller, began a program of paving and grading major roads, as well as rebuilding creaking wooden bridges left from an earlier rural Camberwell.<sup>7</sup>

During the twentieth century, there were occasional calls for the kink in Canterbury Rd to be straightened out, but by and large the pattern of major roads remained unaltered.<sup>8</sup> Residential roads on the other hand were first of all the responsibility of subdividers. Once residents had paid for alignment, council took control.<sup>9</sup> At first they were graded, channelled and kerbed. Afterwards council workers turned to asphaltting the road surface and more slowly, the footpath. Homebuyers in several subdivisions endured terrible footpaths for years. One irate householder wrote to the Argus about the plight of:

*residents of South Camberwell . . . who are compelled to traverse the section of Burke Road between the violet farm and the Gardiner railway station look forward with distaste to the prospect of another winter with the footpath still unmade.*<sup>10</sup>

Slowly footpaths were laid down and trees planted. Eventually residents might prevail on council members to provide street lights, oil lamps at first then gas and finally electricity. For many years Camberwell kerbs continued to be constructed with bluestone pitchers. In 1926 some footpaths were constructed in concrete and then in 1928, in Fairmont Ave and Orrong Cres, the entire footpath and roadway were of concrete construction.<sup>11</sup> Concrete gradually became more common on the footpath and even on the road surface it was sometimes used in place of asphalt (especially in the more prestigious subdivisions, Golf Links Estate for example). Several streets were "modernised" from the late 1920s onwards and this sometimes meant that concrete replaced bluestone kerbing (although no doubt as an economy measure, council resisted calls for concrete kerbs in the 1930s, continuing to use bluestone). But in the ordinary subdivisions of suburban Camberwell, homebuyers, even as recently as the 1950s, found their new homes sitting in asphaltless wastes where streets cracked into clay gullies, footpaths

dissolved to become winter mudslides and household water poured into sudy street puddles.

One major road gave Camberwell its first landmark, and it survives today as the city's most recognisable feature. At the junction of what were to become Burke and Riversdale Rds, a rough track cut diagonally across the right-angled intersection. This became a busy road by the 1860s, carrying traffic from market gardens and farms and villages from as far east as Nunawading. The track, later Camberwell Rd, formed the unique intersection of Camberwell Junction. The cartwheel pattern survives to this day and undoubtedly forms the most recognisable characteristic of Camberwell's street lay-out.

### Sub-division

In 1871, thirty years after Elgar's Special Survey, Camberwell remained a farming rather than a suburban district. Yet, as a portent of changes to come, several real estate figures owned blocks amidst farmland. Patrick Mornane for example owned land along the West Creek between Riversdale and Camberwell Rds.<sup>12</sup> Mornane owned other blocks to the south of Toorak Rd as well. Mornane held this land as an investment and not for farming and it was still forested in the 1930s. Elsewhere in Camberwell; land agents began turning farmland into housing blocks.

The land boom of the 1880s brought subdividers and builders to Camberwell. Between what had formed the southern boundary of Elgar's Special Survey and Riversdale Rd, new estates appeared on farmland in the 1880s. While much of this related to the opening of the railway, several subdivisions (Riversdale Estate around Trafalgar Rd and the Surrey Reserve Estate for example) preceded the beginnings of train travel.<sup>13</sup> Even before the opening of the rail station, FL Flint had sold land at the corner of Canterbury and Highfield Rds as "Ye Heights of Canterbury".

As much as the arrival of the railway, the demise of its principal beneficiary signalled the end for rural Boroondara and the birth of the suburb of Camberwell. After Sir John O'Shanassy's death, his Tara estate was subdivided into 170 lots and sold. Advertisements even went so far as to claim that this was "the most gigantic subdivision placed before the public in the annals of Victoria".<sup>14</sup> In quick succession, new

estates followed the Tara sale. Most of them followed the east-west route of the railway linking Camberwell to the city and running through the central corridor of the suburb.<sup>15</sup>

Land agents divided their estates into lots much larger than an ordinary suburban block. In 1886 for example the Bonney View Hill Estate's "seventeen magnificent villa and mansion sites" were sized at either one or five acres. Just as in the case of the Tara Estate, purchasers then cut up blocks into the smaller and more familiar units of other Melbourne suburbs.<sup>16</sup> Yet by the time these estates came to auction, the high tide of land sales had begun to ebb. Camberwell land attracted a great deal of attention in the euphoria of 1888. While estates were advertised and special trains shuttled prospective buyers out into orchards and dairy farms, funds for building slowed. Many grand estates remained empty until almost the turn of the century.

### Subdivision beyond 1891

Not all land sales and indeed house-building was restricted to the central corridor of the suburb. Away from the east-west railway, subdivisions could be found north of Belmore Rd by 1891.<sup>17</sup> In the 1890s, in the south of Camberwell a small subdivision faced the Outer Circle railway near Ashburton railway station and on isolated sites off Boundary Rd and Norwood Rd. There were other estates between Toorak Rd and Riversdale Rd.

The pace of land sales quickened after 1914, despite the War, and by 1920 much of the remaining empty farmlands of the suburb had been seized on by land agents and auctioned for home sites.<sup>18</sup> Compact subdivisions patterned the land to the south of Toorak Rd into a chequerboard of housing and farmland and in the centre of Camberwell, the Golf Links Estate filled the last large open space in 1927.

A number of creek valleys had escaped the auctioneer's hammer in the central corridor of Camberwell. Towards the northern and southern frontiers dairies and orchards survived as the high tides of building rose and then receded around them. Still, even in the twentieth century, a few old-timers turned blind eyes to housing estates and insisted on a rural future for Camberwell; so one farmer wrote to the *Argus* in 1929, disgusted at the

waste of good grazing land in Camberwell; when drought was devastating so many Victorian farmers, the empty subdivisions of Camberwell were:

*... now full of beautiful feed going to waste which is a nuisance to residents in adjoining areas and actually a liability and expense to ratepayers.*<sup>19</sup>

These empty paddocks were a consequence of the collapse of the 1880s land-boom. When the 1890s depression hit, estate agents folded their tents and abandoned the burgeoning suburb. They left behind rows of empty house blocks, many of which were not built on until after the First World War. Much of Camberwell had only attracted land agents towards the end of the 1880s at a time when Melbourne felt the first chill of financial ruin. Banks, building societies and finance companies cut back lending to home-buyers soon afterwards. By the later 1890s these institutions were, according to the *Australian Real Property Annual* of 1913:

*overburdened with realty which had fallen into their hands by way of foreclosed mortgages. Population had decreased and enterprise was stunned by a long depression.*<sup>20</sup>

The 1883 Surrey Hills Reserve estate and subdivisions such as that advertised by the Burwood Township Land Company as having an "English village environment"<sup>21</sup> remained in suspended animation until well into the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>22</sup>

Railway enquiries in the 1920s regularly highlighted the many empty building blocks remaining in Camberwell. For example, in 1925 members of parliament sought a route for a rail link between Yarra Glen and the city. If such a line passed through Camberwell they predicted an immediate jump in building. Along the proposed route through Deepdene they found nearly 6000 building blocks but less than eight hundred houses. Along a proposed route to Canterbury they identified 2300 houses but 6500 blocks subdivided (held by less than four thousand individuals).<sup>23</sup>

Especially on the far southern and northern fringes (south of High St and North of Doncaster Rd) subdivided land remained paddocks and not houseblocks.

The young Graham McInnes recalled when, as one of the First Toorak Scout Troop, he would bicycle out to the end of the car line to Ashburton " . . . here the houses thinned and the landscape was one of open paddocks dotted with blue-gum, sheoak, and cootamundra . . . these paddocks were rented out to the local dairyman."<sup>24</sup>

By the time of the Second World War, even these paddocks had begun to fill with houses. Post-war estate agents had to convince buyers to move to the eastern edge of Camberwell, especially the north-east. A Housing Commission Estate filled the last open area in Ashburton. From the end of the 1920s through to the Second World War there were few new estates and even after the war, apart from the new Housing Commission Estates, most building took place on land subdivided much earlier.

With few exceptions, land agents chose a simple rectilinear pattern for streets. Often they failed to match the pattern of their subdivision with those of earlier estates, so that by the middle of the 1920s, the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission held up parts of Camberwell as an example of unsightly and dangerous street lay-out.<sup>25</sup> Despite some irregular junctions, a reassuring grid of right-angled suburban streets had spread out through all corners of the suburb by the 1960s.

The picture of suburban subdivision in Camberwell then is one with land sales growing from the central axis of the railway and most dense near Camberwell, Canterbury and Surrey Hills stations by the end of the 1880s. Building only proceeded on the fringes of these subdivisions after the turn of the century. New subdivisions in the 1920s spread housing to the north and south but even then housing often went ahead on blocks already subdivided before World War One. By the end of the 1950s most of Camberwell's land had passed under the auctioneer's hammer.

### Suburban style

Unimaginative when it came to laying down streets, subdividers conjured up the most alluring images in their advertisements. Despite plumbing the depths of his literary talent, the individual land agent failed to identify any unique style for his new estate. The



poetic seller encapsulated a standard catalogue of qualities in advertising. These advertisements conjure up the essence of the suburban style of Camberwell.

On some estates, agents insisted on certain qualities in house designs, even to the extent of placing covenants on titles to govern materials and costs of dwellings. In doing so they were responding to buyers' demands. Camberwell from the 1880s onwards was designed to express all the best in suburban life.<sup>26</sup>

Real estate agents were vociferous in their praise of Camberwell's superior qualities. The Camberwell Heights estate for example was promoted as having the enviable status of "being the very Finest and Highest Land in the Whole District" while prospective purchasers of the Highfield Grange estate, East Camberwell, were assured that the "Eastern Suburbs" have long been favourites both on account of the beauty of their position and their healthy character." Adjectives such as "Grand", "Elegant", "Popular" littered sales blurbs, colouring "neighbourhood[s] [which] cannot be surpassed for respectability".<sup>27</sup>

A common refrain runs through almost one hundred years of Camberwell subdivision. From the 1880s onwards land agents painted a picture of Camberwell as a convenient retreat from the city. It was a place ideal for secluded family life. Agents set the suburban home in rolling hills. Each house faced a quiet street, complete with services and views to an arcadian mountain range (enthusiastically represented in some brochures as the "Snowy Mountains"). They sketched in a railway station, no more than a short stroll away, with the city just in view.

This suburban idyll appealed to Melburnians in the 1880s, just as it does today. Camberwell has been settled by home buyers attracted to a retreat away from the city yet linked to it; a suburb in the heart of charming countryside but with all urban amenities. Camberwell was a part of the city, yet apart from it. And it was a place of self-contained families. At least so land agents suggested.

In both prolific eras of subdivision, the 1880s and the 1920s, land agents emphasised similar qualities in their estates. Windsor Park, sold in 1886, was

promoted as spanning the highest part of Surrey Hills "so famous for its grandeur and panoramic views". The Mount Prospect Estate advertised some years later, commanded, so the vendors, Birtchnell Brothers and Parker pointed out:

*grand elevation and undulating character . . . with cheerful surroundings is of itself health-giving and the expansive and ever-changing views of the varied homesteads with the mountains as a backdrop give a superb panoramic effect.*<sup>28</sup>

If buyers needed further convincing, agents reminded them that the Surrey Hills station was only a two-mile walk, the Yan Yean water was on the way and electricity would soon follow. The Bonney View sellers had placed the "proposed" Balwyn station (Outer Circle line) on all their subdivision plans and as well pointed to the short distance between their estate and the Canterbury station. Most of the 1880s subdividers highlighted the existing mansions and villas on their plans suggesting that the social cachet of these established seats would be automatically acquired by purchasers of empty blocks. An existing brick villa with its two-and-a-half acres of orchards, gardens and grass paddock conferred additional worth on the 41 sites of the Mont Albert Park Estate.<sup>29</sup>

#### **The modern image**

To access, services, views and arcadian charm, subdividers of the 1920s appended prospects of material gain, and the delights of family life. The subdividers of the Burwood Tramway Estate referred to the speedy trip to town on the new electric tram, the constant building activity around the estate, inevitably rising land values, and as well, the seclusion of their new estate. Although carved out near the route of the Balwyn tram, agents for the Camberwell City Heights Estate, reminded young couples of the way in which gradients and street alignment accorded with contemporary theories about the needs of motorists. But more than that they returned to familiar selling points, this time unrivalled beyond Victoria's shores:

*a representative official visitor from the Dominion of New Zealand says "it is glorious, the only panoramic scene to compare with it is the world-famed view from Mt Eden at Auckland."*<sup>30</sup>

Unimaginative buyers were reminded of the trans-Tasman comparison in the names of the subdivision's streets: "Highview", "Bellevue", "Viewpoint", "Mountainview" all inspired by the "great freedom of vision to mountains." Agents for this estate had sought to give their subdivision a modern tone. They proposed that street fences would be prohibited so that only gardens would be "on view" and curved intersections would give motorists safer cornering while island plantations in roads would slow down those who sped. The new estate offered ultimately, "a site for the home beautiful and for the development of the family life, health and education in their fullest and happiest sense".<sup>31</sup>

The land agents and their beguiling portraits of unblemished suburbia did much to shape the physical and social character of Camberwell, especially between 1888 and the economic collapse of 1929. The street alignments of their subdivisions, sometimes the covenants they attached to titles and the image of service, panorama and rural beauty with which they decorated their advertisements set standards followed in house design, street plantings and zoning laws.

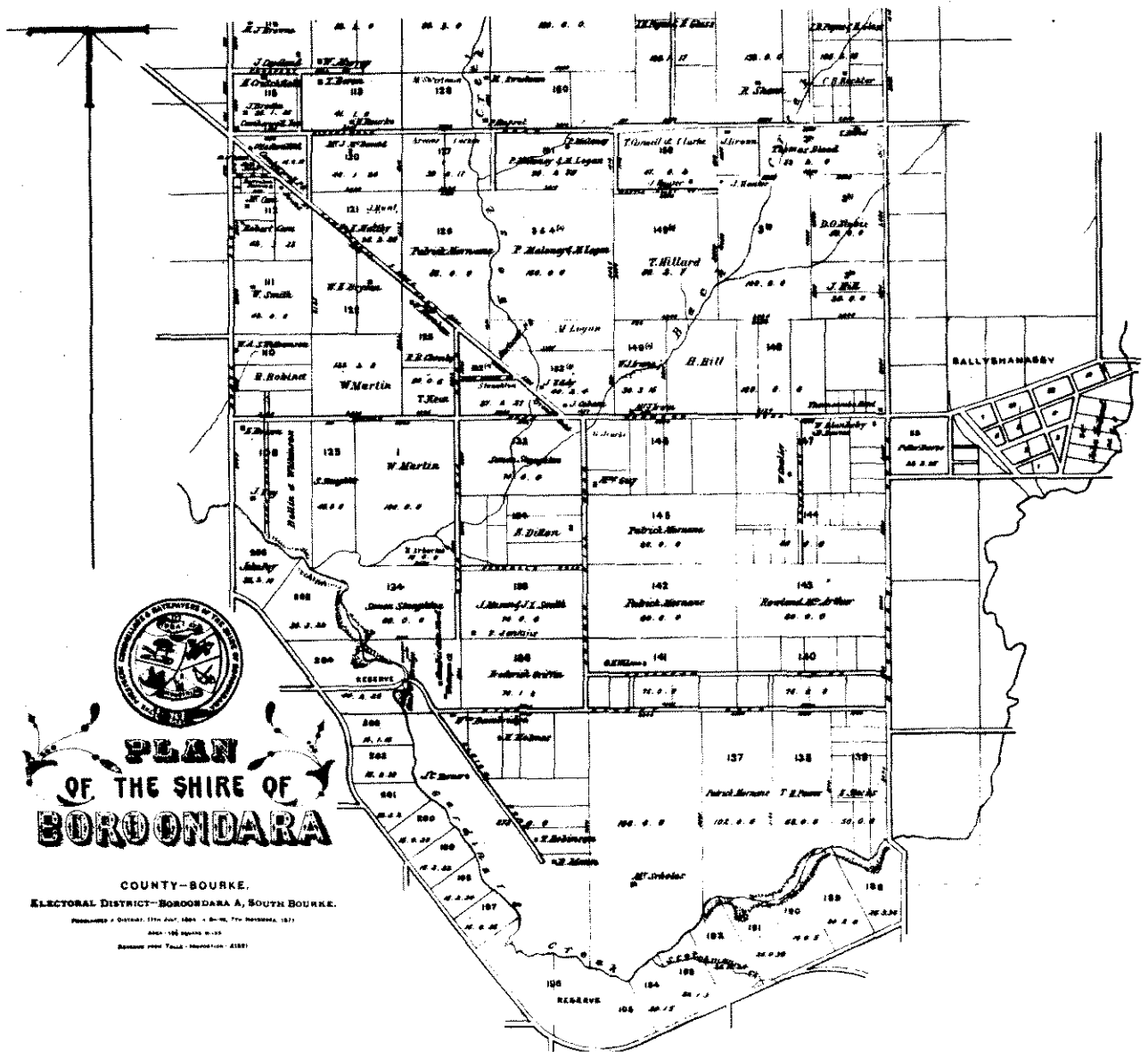
### Summary

The origins of the present urban form of Camberwell preceded the land agents. The network of major north-south and east-west streets, a crooked skeleton formed roughly in the 1850s and gradually straightened and refined to the end of the nineteenth century, set down an underlying pattern. Subdivision of the land in between these roads into farms and then suburban estates established a network of minor streets and individual blocks, again refined through to the present. The 1880s subdivisions were generally in the central corridor of the suburb. Even here building lagged behind land sale so that many of today's streets present a range of period styles. Land agents coloured this chequerboard as attractively as possible. On their estates, generations of home-buyers sought an idyllic suburban existence. Their ambitions were narrowed down to the individual suburban home. For more than one hundred years the character of these houses and the spread of building has depended on the skeletal elements of Camberwell; roadways, land subdivision and estate sales.

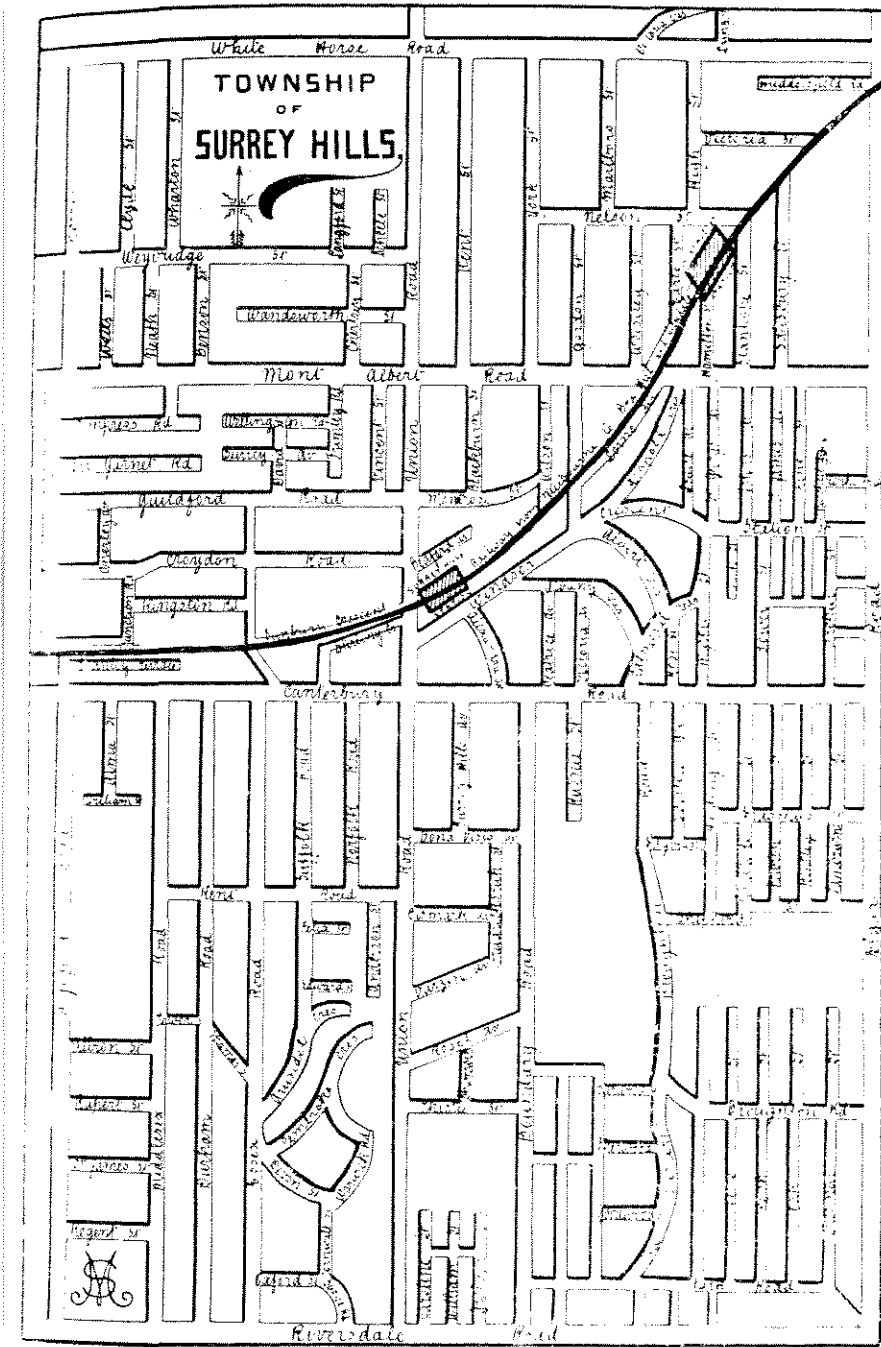
- 
- 1 The present City of Camberwell was a part of the Boroondara Road Board formed in 1856 and including present-day Hawthorn and Kew; Kew and Hawthorn both left the Road Board in 1860; Boroondara became a Shire in 1871 and in 1902 this became the Shire of Camberwell and Boroondara; in 1905 this became the Town of Boroondara; in 1914 it became the City of Camberwell.
  - 2 Henry Elgar was a merchant in several places in Asia including the Phillipines and Macau; there were in fact three Special Surveys in Boroondara, 1841, 1843 and 1845. The Boroondara Estate was subdivided into 27 lots in 1844; (information from Jocelyn Hall, Surrey Hills Historical Society).
  - 3 Camberwell Conservation Study, Study Area 1, "Background history of the municipality", 1986, (by Gina McWilliam), p 6.
  - 4 D Maclean, "Balwyn 1841-1941", Melbourne 1942.
  - 5 Camberwell Municipality, Minute Books, 24 February 1890, Minutes held at the Camberwell Municipal Offices.
  - 6 JA Allan, "Camberwell in the eighties", "Camberwell", typescript Camberwell Local History Collection, Camberwell Library (CLHC) p 17.
  - 7 Most of these references come from Allan's extensive and rambling accounts of road improvements; see JA Allan, "Camberwell", pp 22-39 (part 1) especially.
  - 8 Council minutes, 20 February 1928.
  - 9 *Ibid*, 22 September 1890.
  - 10 *Argus*, 16 May 1928.
  - 11 *Ibid*, 28 June 1926 and 20 February 1928.
  - 12 Lands subdivison map, Parish of Boroondara, Lands Department, 1871.
  - 13 See below chp 4.
  - 14 Quoted in G Blainey, *A History of Camberwell*, Melbourne 1980, pp 55-56.
  - 15 McWilliam, "Background history", Camberwell conservation study, p 8.
  - 16 Bonney View Hill Estate Map, H2 5537 68 428, Camberwell local history collection.
  - 17 Blainey, *Camberwell*, map facing p 64.
  - 18 See map from source above.
  - 19 *Argus*, 22 January 1929.
  - 20 *Metropolitan Realty Values*, p 22.
  - 21 *Hawthorn Advertiser*, 22 June 1888.
  - 22 S Priestley, *Making their Mark, The Victorians*, vol 3, McMahon's Point 1984, p 149.
  - 23 *Report of the parliamentary standing committee on Melbourne-Yarra Glen rail link, Victorian Parliamentary Papers*, 1925, vol 2.
  - 24 Graham McInnes, *The road to Gundagai*, Melbourne nd, Sun Books ed. p 186.
  - 25 *Report of the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission*, 1929, General Plan of Melbourne, p 158. The area specifically referred to was between Toorak Rd, Burke Rd, Cochran St and Radnor St.
  - 26 On suburbanisation and the suburban ideal in this period, see Graeme Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, Melbourne 1978, chp 7.
  - 27 Local and city agents advertising material, Camberwell local history collection (after CLHC).
  - 28 Mt Prospect Estate Plan, CLHC.
  - 29 Mont Albert Park plans, CLHC.
  - 30 Camberwell City Heights Advertisement, CLHC.
  - 31 *Ibid*.
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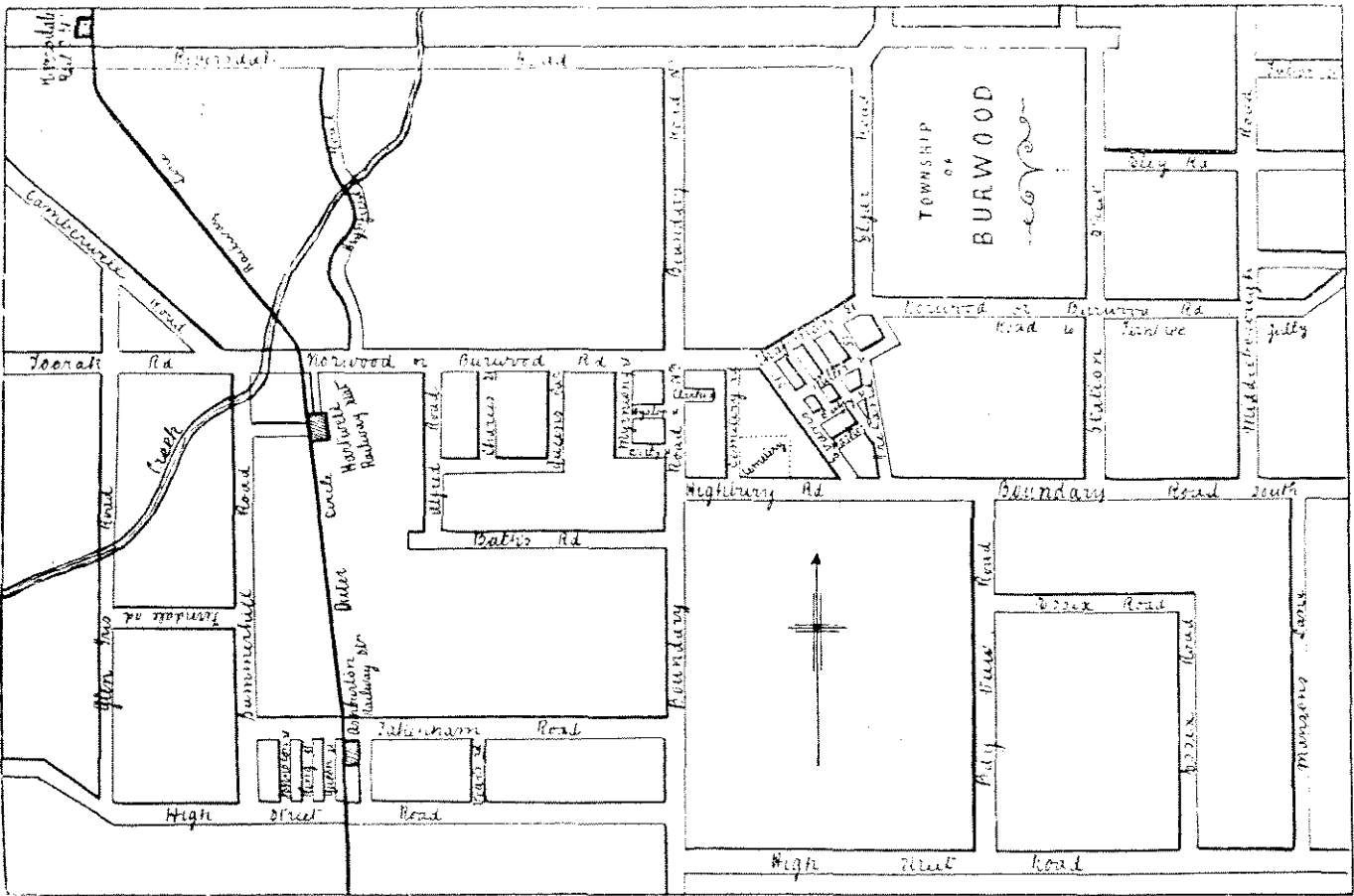
1.2 Camberwell South 1871; roads and land-owners 1871



1.3 Street pattern Surrey Hills 1902



1.4 Street pattern Burwood 1902



Source: Sands and McDougall Melbourne Directory 1902





1.6 East Camberwell land sale 1914

THE RECORD LAND SALE FOR MANY YEARS



Photo. of Auction "Camberwell Estate," East Camberwell

— Successful Subdivisional Sales —

WE give Special Attention to SUBDIVISIONAL AUCTION SALES and have secured the following results in recent transactions:—

|       |     |  |       |
|-------|-----|--|-------|
| MAY   | 16, | 1914.—CAMBERWELL ESTATE, E. CAMBERWELL, sold every lot.. Total   | £9956 |
| May   | 9,  | 1914.—Bay View Estate, Surrey Hills, sold every lot .. . . . . . | £2421 |
| May   | 2,  | 1914.—Carlsberg Estate, Heidelberg, sold 16 lots .. . . . . .    | £1730 |
| April | 25, | 1914.—Crown Estate, Pascoevale, sold 38 lots .. . . . . .        | £1693 |
| March | 21, | 1914.—Old Castle Estate, East Malvern, sold 32 lots .. . . . . . | £2562 |
| Dec.  | 13, | 1913.—Tramway Estate, Caulfield, sold 31 lots.. . . . . .        | £1592 |
| Nov.  | 29, | 1913.—Terminus Estate, East Malvern .. . . . . .                 | £1294 |
| Nov.  | 22, | 1913.—Station Estate, Glenroy, sold every lot.. . . . . .        | £1374 |
| Nov.  | 15, | 1913.—Summer Hill Estate, E. Malvern, sold 72 lots.. . . . . .   | £7982 |
| Oct.  | 4,  | 1913.—Station Estate, Pascoevale, sold every lot .. . . . . .    | £1760 |

As Advertising is such an important factor in the success of a Sale we have a Specialised Advertising Service always available for the exclusive use of our Clients

# DUNCAN & WELER

AUCTIONEER, A. J. WELER

Estate and Financial Agents, Insurance Brokers and Sworn Valuers

Head Office: 67 QUEEN ST., MELBOURNE

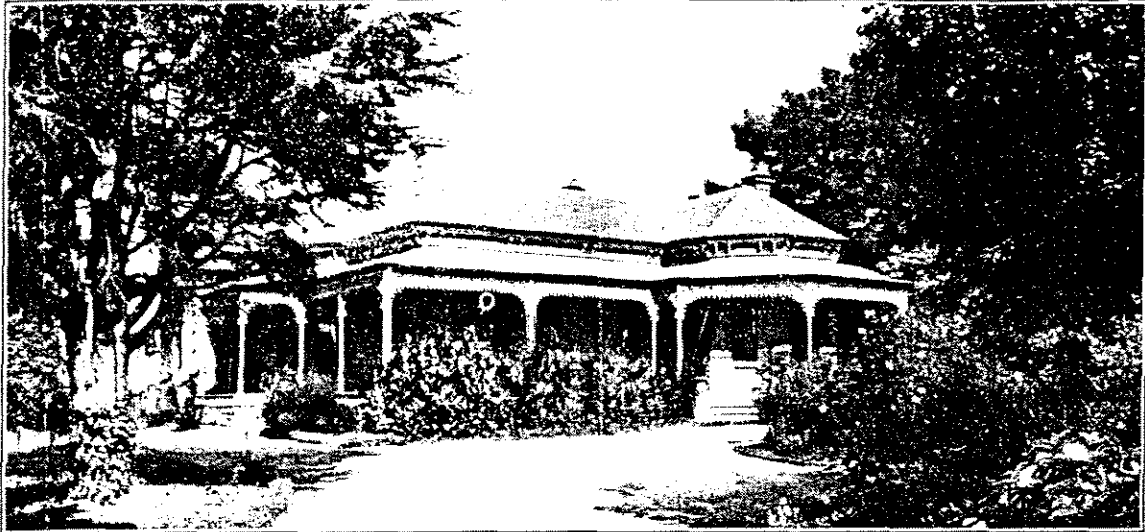
(First Door from Collins Street)

And at ARMADALE and CANTERBURY

TELEPHONES

2721 — Central  
130 — Malvern  
69 — Canterbury

1.7 Estate subdivision 1928



**"Warrawee"**

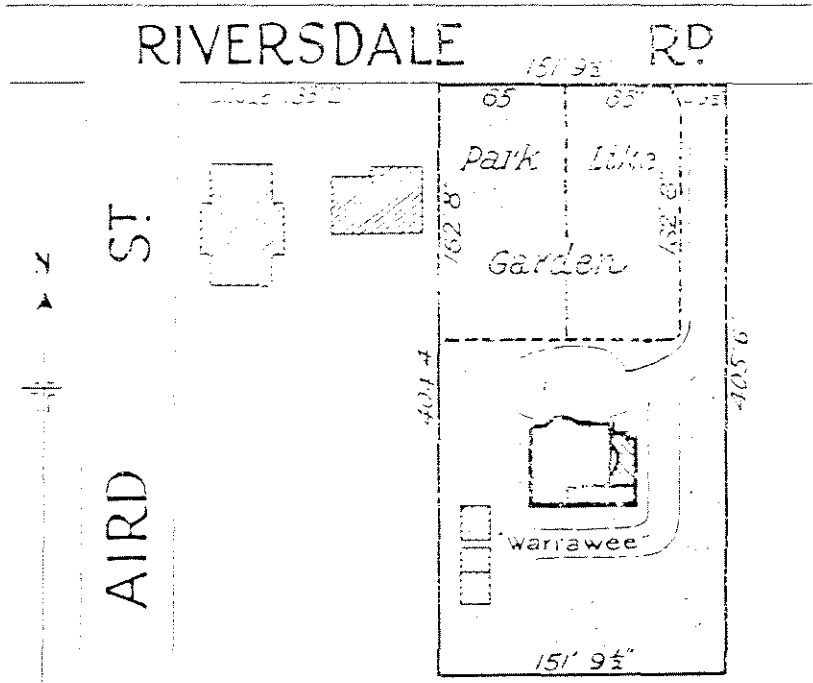
Contains 9 Main, Well-appointed lofty rooms, the approximate sizes of which are: Sittingroom, 20 x 15, and Bay; Diningroom, 20 x 15, and Bay; Front Bedroom, 20 x 15; other Bedrooms (2) 15 x 15, 14 x 14 and 12 x 10; Breakfastroom, 14 x 14; Kitchen, 14 x 12; Well-fitted Bathroom, with internal sewerage; 2 Pantries, Linen Closet, Scullery, etc.

Most of the Rooms have Fireplaces, and some are fitted with handsome Marble Mantelpieces.

The whole of the interior is in excellent order. Electric Light, Gas and Telephone are installed.

In short, "Warrawee" presents itself as a most desirable family Home, situated in one of the finest residential quarters of this favored suburb.

AMPLE ROOM FOR A TENNIS COURT.



*Rough Sketch showing location of "WARRAWEE" & possible Subdivision.*

1.8 A fashionable subdivision; Sunnyside Estate

HOW TO GET TO THE "SUNNYSIDE" SALE

Take tram from Princes Bridge to Camberwell Junction every few minutes: a truly magnificent service. Time, 20 minutes. Fare, 4d. Or train to Camberwell Station, thence tram to "Sunnyside Estate." : : : : Fare, 1d. Time, 3 mins. Trains leave Flinders Street on day of sale, at 1.45, 2.5, 2.15, 2.25, and 2.45. Electric trams from St. Kilda Road via Malvern Road, right to the Estate. Fare, 4d.



CONVENIENCES COUNT : : : : NO-ADVANS : : : : No Estate can offer such a wealth of conveniences as these. READ THEM!:-

- SUNNYSIDE ESTATE** Right on the New Burke Road Electric Tram Route, with Penny Section stopping place at Sunnyside Avenue.
- SUNNYSIDE ESTATE** Only a few minutes' walk to the Riversdale Road direct to Princes Bridge Line. Fare 4d. Time 20 minutes.
- SUNNYSIDE ESTATE** From your front door to St. Kilda Esplanade. Time 30 minutes. Fare 5d. And anywhere else desired.
- SUNNYSIDE ESTATE** St. John's Church of England and the magnificent Church of "Our Lady of Victories." Both adjoining.
- SUNNYSIDE ESTATE** The Camberwell Methodist Church, Town Hall, Camberwell Post Office All practically adjoining the Estate.
- SUNNYSIDE ESTATE** The Shady Well-Kept Public Park and Spacious Recreation Ground, Bowling Green, and Tennis Court are within 3 minutes.
- SUNNYSIDE ESTATE** The E. S. & A. Bank, Picture Theatres, Stores and Shops are all within a few minutes' walk

THE BEAUTIFUL MODERN HOMES SURROUNDING "SUNNYSIDE"

Clearly reveals what others think of this locality -- "Camberwell the Queen Suburb of Melbourne." No Estate can compare with the Sunnyside Estate. : : : : Glorious mountain views and high healthy environments. : : Consult your doctor he will advise Sunnyside. : : Consult your architect, he will advise Sunnyside. Consult your own judgment, and you will buy : : Sunnyside. : : You cannot go wrong



An Aviator's View of "SUNNYSIDE ESTATE" depicting the direct electric connection with the heart of the City of Melbourne, and also St. Kilda Esplanade and adjacent surroundings.



- SUNNYSIDE ESTATE** State School No. 868, also the R.C. School almost adjoins Estate. See Photos
- SUNNYSIDE ESTATE** A Postal Box is on the Estate, Electric Light, Gas, and Sewer are at each end of the Estate.
- SUNNYSIDE ESTATE** The Roads are Fully Metalled and Channelled, and taken over by the Camberwell Council.
- SUNNYSIDE ESTATE** A Plantation of Shade Trees has been paid for and will be planted by the Council this winter.
- SUNNYSIDE ESTATE** An Extensive Panorama of Mountains and Views unsurpassed, available from nearly every lot.
- SUNNYSIDE ESTATE** These photos taken this month show you most of these important buildings all near Sunnyside.
- SUNNYSIDE ESTATE** A Metropolitan Board of Works Water Main has been laid along each Road. Several Doctors, Dentists, and Chemists reside within 2 minutes' walk of the Sunnyside Estate.

■ 1.9 Post-war suburbia from Beckett Park



## Chapter Two

# CAMBERWELL HOUSES

Reflecting on the post-war townscape one Camberwell resident launched a broad attack on Australian houses. Robin Boyd defined the suburban style of the 1960s as "Featurist":

*the living room thrust forward as a feature of the facade, a wide picture window as a feature of the projecting wall . . . the Featurist proudly destroys any unifying entity . . . applying gratuitous extra items wherever he fears the eye may be tempted to rest.*<sup>1</sup>

From the viewpoint of an architectural Modernist in the 1960s, Camberwell housing must lack any unifying theme. Features accumulated along streets, gargoyles on Edwardian villas, shingles on bungalows, strapwork on Tudor Revival cottages and wrought iron features on a 1950s brick veneer. It is in the history of their development rather than in any harmonious style that Camberwell housing has its greatest appeal.

Houses in Camberwell reflect the values of suburban home-owners at successive phases in the history of metropolitan Melbourne. In addition they record changes in styles from the mid-nineteenth to the late-twentieth century. As well the housing of the suburb has been shaped by changing building technique and municipal regulation. Each of these influences are traced in this chapter.

### Rural retreat: 1850-1888

Hills to the east of the Yarra River had attracted "gentlemen" buyers from the 1850s onwards. Charles Gavan Duffy, lived in "Auburn Lodge".<sup>2</sup> Another Irishman, and political rival of Duffy, John O'Shanassy, lived in "Tara", just to the east of Burke Rd. O'Shanassy advertised tenders for "Tara" in 1858 during his term as Chief Secretary and in 1883 (when he had become Premier) he extended the house. Yet, the Sands and McDougall *Directory* listed only 253 residents in 1880. Amongst a population of farmers, there were a few city "gentlemen"; like Ernest Carter, a dentist living in Camberwell Rd and James Lindsay, an accountant in Burke Rd. Most others still earned a living from primary industry, William Cherry, for example, a grazier in Balwyn Rd, or Mrs Deschamp,

a vigneron, in Mont Albert Rd.<sup>3</sup> In the whole of the Shire of Boroondara there were less than 300 dwellings in 1881 and of these most were small homesteads rather than mansions.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless mansions set the tone for the 1880s when other prominent Melburnians moved away from the city to Camberwell. Amongst them were John McDonald, a Collins Street estate agent who lived in "St John's Wood", a two-storey house set in four acres of park land complete with grass meadows and pleasure gardens. In 1888 and 1889 figures prominent in colonial professions, the arts or commerce moved to Camberwell. They continued to build two-storeyed stuccoed mansions with fashionable and standard Italianate ornament. Gordon Gooch, a music professor, moved into a ten-roomed mansion, "Chalgrove" in Trafalgar Rd in 1889.<sup>5</sup> "Frognall", a 16-roomed mansion was completed for Clarence Hicks, a local timber miller in the same year. The "roofs, the gables and the turrets" which Alexander Sutherland spied from a Hawthorn hilltop "embosomed in [the] . . . verdure" of Camberwell, were most likely the crowning glory of a mixture of pre-boom and boomtime mansions.<sup>6</sup>

### Middling suburb 1888-1920

Like all nineteenth-century cities, Melbourne in the 1880s distended outwards into a belt of suburbs. Immigrants started to build suburban villas rather than country mansions by the end of the 1880s in Camberwell. London and the new industrial cities of England had spawned suburbs early in the century and immigrants to land-boom Melbourne brought with them a faith in the superiority of suburban living; the suburban couple and their children centred their energies on the home, fondly imagined as a villa set in its own gardens, with a view over rolling countryside, a supremely private world apart from the smoke and danger of the city. The perfect suburb was settled by respectable families headed by white-collar workers and all good suburbanites saved to buy rather than rent a home.

Melbourne, with its residents firmly attached to the suburban ideal, oozed outwards with lower densities

than European cities. This sprawl extended more to the east rather than to the west of the city and Camberwell from the 1880s onwards became a suburb of white-collar families.<sup>7</sup> Its building scale by 1891 matched that in nearby suburbs with rows of suburban homes spread across the estates of older mansions.

These new houses were generally single-storey with perhaps one bay thrust forward alongside a verandah and with rich and varied decoration from the tiled verandah to patterned external walls and an ornamented chimney. For all their pretensions, the suburbanites of the 1880s lowered Camberwell's tone. In 1891 in the Centre Ward, less than 30 per cent of houses had more than six rooms. Where mansions like "Frognaill" and "Shrublands" have become local landmarks, single-fronted cottages and small villas have vanished.

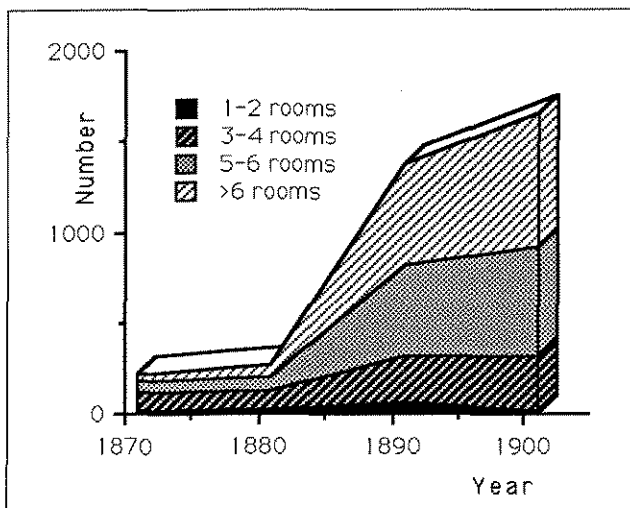


Fig 2.1 Camberwell; house size, 1871-1901  
Source: *Census of Victoria 1871-1901*

When building revived after the 1890s financial crash a new style typified Camberwell. Many vacant blocks on the estates of the 1880s were now filled by single-storeyed, red-brick Queen Anne houses. Australian adaptations of English styles which emerged during the economic recovery of the later nineties "and lingered on until World War II".<sup>8</sup> These creations were described by Walter Burley Griffin as excessively "assertive . . . red with red brick tiles and all decked out in white-painted wooden trappings".<sup>9</sup> Robin Boyd sniffed that they were "full of quaint conceit and petty details".<sup>10</sup> Local conservation architect George

Tibbits excused them as an attempt by late-nineteenth-century Melburnians to show that they were

*. . . very respectable people quite able to hold their own with those in the old country [and who] . . . sought to prove it . . . by groping among the ruins of Elizabethan and Queen Anne styles for models of antipodean houses.*<sup>11</sup>

The scale of these buildings increased, with attics added to the single-storey and new rooms extending the simple floor plans of 1880s villas. Yet local builders continued to erect some cheaper housing. Wooden dwellings, for example those in the valley between Surrey Hills and Camberwell stations, attracted many working-class buyers to Camberwell. During the 1890s only 200 new houses appeared in the suburb, but between the turn of the century and 1920, the total number of houses rose from less than two to more than five thousand.

The Edwardian surge in Camberwell building has left some wonderful brick villas; but most of the new houses erected between 1901 and 1921 were wooden and they often housed workers.<sup>12</sup>

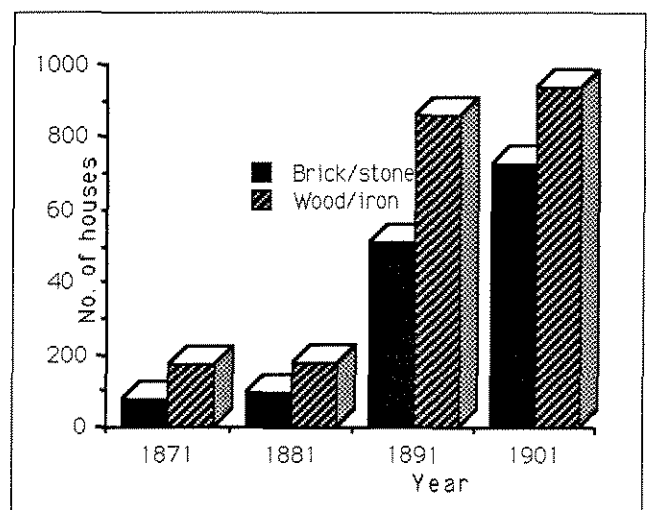


Fig 2.2: Camberwell; house materials 1871-1901  
Source: *Census of Victoria 1871-1901*

A witness to the Royal Commission investigating housing conditions in 1917 claimed that no one class of dwellings or purchasers typified Camberwell. Constable James West of the Camberwell station claimed that there were many "smaller workmen's

homes" in Camberwell, on blocks measuring 50 feet by 150 feet.<sup>13</sup> Asked about the residents of these cottages he reported them to be a good many business people, and a good many workmen; they are people working on brick kilns, drivers and so on - milk drivers and that class of men.<sup>14</sup>

At prices of £4 for a foot of land, the Commissioners were unconvinced that workers could ever settle in Camberwell. West insisted that they were able to buy in the suburb, "by the help of building societies, paying so much down and paying it off by degrees".<sup>15</sup> He did though admit that while workingmen's cottages were going up in Camberwell, a man working on the wharves would not be able to buy there.

The houses he agreed were not for "that sort of working man".<sup>16</sup> In general the buildings of the later-nineteenth century were neither small cottages nor grand mansions. Camberwell was becoming a middling sort of place.

### California or home county 1920-45

New suburbanites between the wars turned their backs on Camberwell's Edwardian and Victorian villas. Even before 1920 some architect-designed houses boasted a new use of materials, colour and internal space. In 1915, Francis Barlow designed himself a home in Gascoigne St with the aim of "doing away with long passages" typical of nineteenth-century villas.<sup>17</sup> When AH Carleton designed a house for Thomas Purves in Logan St, Canterbury he did away with Edwardian dressings and used red-pine shingles. He also turned the house on an angle of 45 degrees to the street.<sup>18</sup> Houses began to look more squat, to run across the block or be set at an angle and to use more timber and shingle in decoration. Their changing internal lay-out is discussed in the following chapter.

A range of building designs from the United States distinguished some inter-war estates. Many of these took inspiration from Meso-America by way of California; Pre-Columbian, Spanish Mission, even Aztec styles appeared in Camberwell streets. AW Plaisted designed a multi-level Spanish Mission home for Dr Thomas in Canterbury, where it's "arches, deep alcoves, latticed windows, wrought-iron gates, porticoes and mullioned windows [were] grouped in

pleasing variety"; a welcome dash of Hispanic verve amidst stolid English shapes.<sup>19</sup> The bungalow in Californian and other guises typified many areas. By the end of the 1920s, Tudor Revival or "Olde English" cottages jostled for attention alongside the new Californian styles. In 1930 the architect OA Yuncken created his own "old English cottage with its steep-pointed roof and deep set porch" in Highton Gve, Balwyn.<sup>20</sup> Anglophile Camberwell drew heavily on romantic images of England. The English cottage was marked by a steep-pitched gable end, small-paned windows, and a gothic arch over the porch. Almost all of the architect-designed homes of Camberwell boasted exposed pine woodwork and cheaper houses followed suit. For those unable to afford these exotic styles, Camberwell builders offered smaller "bijou" villas during the 1920s.

Beyond the individual house some designers experimented with street lay-out. Basil Hayler, a Camberwell builder, carried out one of the area's few "experiments in street planning" along "garden suburb" lines when he created Torrington Ave, Canterbury, on a section of the William Craig Estate. Bungalows were set at varying distances from the street with a "circular drive for a car turn" at the blind end and generous "nature strips".<sup>21</sup> Humphries and other local builders designed "in every way perfect . . . ornate modern bungalows". These lined the grid of "modern concrete roads" on the Camberwell Golf Links Estate between Riversdale and Camberwell Roads during the 1930s.<sup>22</sup>

Eclectic and romantic in their choice of imagery, Camberwell builders met greater demand than those in any other suburb. In 1929 there were more houses built in Camberwell than in any other suburban municipality.<sup>23</sup>

Building revived quickly after the depression, so that in 1936, one in seven of all building permits issued to Melbourne builders were for sites in Camberwell.<sup>24</sup> During the year Camberwell approved more buildings than were then standing in the whole of Daylesford or Portland and the number of applications was only exceeded in the City of Melbourne.<sup>25</sup> The number of houses in Camberwell more than doubled between 1921 and 1933 and between 1933 and 1954. By then there were few vacant blocks.

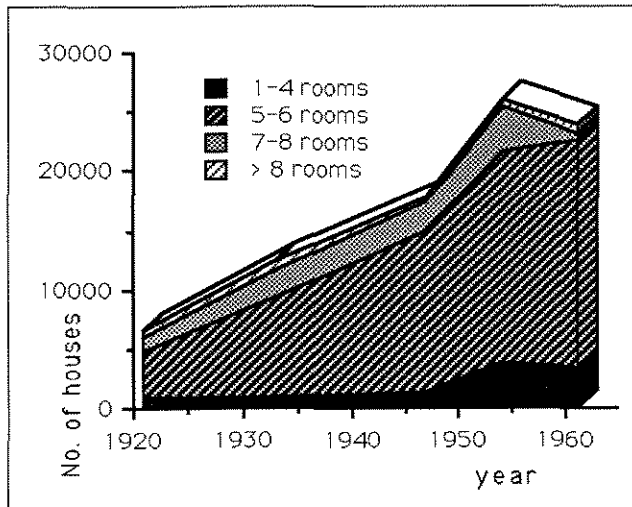


Fig 2.3 Camberwell house size; 1921-61  
Source *Census of Australia, 1921-61*

After the Second World War, an L-shape typified houses on cheaper estates. In North Balwyn innovative two-storeyed villas, many with “waterfall” facades gave a fashionable lift to several estates. At the southern boundary, the Housing Commission of Victoria, coloured Camberwell with their own distinctive plans and with experimental techniques and new materials from the Commission’s Holmesglen factory.

### Building regulation

The character of this building was determined not just by the imaginations of purchasers or the designs of architects, but by municipal regulation.

In August 1889, Camberwell councillors approved a building by-law, to apply to buildings in Burke, Prospect Hill, Fermanagh, Canterbury and Guildford Rds.<sup>26</sup> Discussions on building controls continued and in 1896, inspired by successful regulation in Kew and Hawthorn, several councillors pressed for a comprehensive building by-law.<sup>27</sup> By January 1898, the new by-law had been completed. After a Special Meeting of council and months of debate, By-law 15 was carried in December 1898.<sup>28</sup> The regulations were amended in December 1900.<sup>29</sup>

By-law 15 began a continuous attempt to enforce high standards of building in Camberwell. The by-law specified that, in certain streets, any new building had to be set back 30 feet from the roadway unless it was constructed in brick or stone. A minimum

value of £400 was set for buildings in the “brick areas”.<sup>30</sup>

By then Camberwell people were caught up in the national fears about slums and the environmental dangers of urban life. The slum reform crusades prompted the Canterbury Progress Association to appeal for “minimum allotments” in Camberwell.<sup>31</sup> As advocates from the Minimum Allotments League were presenting evidence before the Royal Commission on Housing Conditions, Camberwell moved to fix minimum allotment sizes for the municipality.<sup>32</sup>

Despite by-laws, irresponsible builders were able to put up slum-like houses in Camberwell. Council inspectors had found that single-roomed wooden buildings could “get through” the building regulations. Small two-roomed wooden cottages lined Glen Iris Rd and shanties disfigured the new Tramways Estate. The building inspector however was convinced that “in many cases the two-rooms develop into ordinary dwellings later on, especially where land is valuable”.<sup>33</sup>

Once the Royal Commission delivered its findings, some of the concern about poor housing abated. Soon afterwards GJ Maggs, a Gardenvale bank clerk, challenged Camberwell’s attempts to define exclusive residential areas. In October 1923 Camberwell issued comprehensive building by-laws so as to “prohibit the forming of slum areas while giving the small-holder no cause for complaint at their stringency”. As well so that visitors might gain “a true conception of the property of the city” only more expensive houses could be sited along main roads. These were to have an area of 1500 square feet on allotments of 50 feet by 120 feet. At least half of each block could not be built on and a minimum size of 6000 square feet was set for all houses. Corner blocks had to be slightly larger. Any new streets had to have a width of 33 feet and in narrower streets new houses were to be set back 20 feet. No house could be within four feet of a side fence; bedrooms had to have ten-foot ceilings and 8000 cubic feet of air space; A separate laundry, washroom and kitchen had to be constructed in any new house.<sup>34</sup> By-law 46 in 1923 also attempted to define residential areas in Camberwell.<sup>35</sup>



GJ Maggs, executor of a will which included a Camberwell property, wanted to subdivide this land and sell it as shop sites (at the corner of Whitehorse Rd and Cherry St). Maggs' challenge succeeded in the Supreme Court since the by-law had no proper definition of a residential area.<sup>36</sup> Camberwell continued with attempts to control building materials as well as siting, size and set-backs for new housing.<sup>37</sup> In August 1926, the council discussed a new building by-law, once again attempting to set out areas where only brick dwellings would be permitted. Passed in February 1928, By-law 49 set out the brick areas of Camberwell. The by-law was altered and replaced by By-law 53 in 1928 with a more extensive list of streets where only brick houses, dwellings of "brick or stone properly bonded", could be built.<sup>38</sup> A new by-law in 1928 attempt to ban wooden buildings altogether.<sup>39</sup> Despite such regulation, builders continued to construct wooden housing. Between 1921 and 1933 both brick and wooden houses more than doubled in number and not until 1947 did brick houses outnumber those built in timber.<sup>40</sup>

Private subdividers also controlled buildings on new estates. In a typical scheme, the Belmont Heights Estate (facing Whitehorse Rd) permitted only brick buildings.<sup>41</sup> At the other end of the city, Glen Iris subdivisions permitted only brick buildings; all plans had to be approved and a minimum value was prescribed for all housing.<sup>42</sup>

Builders ran foul of the regulations for various reasons. Brick veneers confused housing inspectors. Council refused permission for one builder to put up a brick veneer house in Stoddart St in 1928.<sup>43</sup> When a builder proposed a brick veneer for a brick area in Lexia St, Ashburton, the design was at first refused. Labelling this a "policy of ignorance", Councillor Barnes managed to convince fellow councillors to overturn the decision.<sup>44</sup>

Owners wanting to put up garages to protect their brand-new automobiles found that they had to meet set-back requirements and leave space to the side of the garage; as well they had to use approved materials. When owners wanted to extend houses with a porch, they were often refused permission. Even JP Walker's pergola at 87 Bowen St fell foul of regulations. Mr Walker wanted to extend his pergola

with an iron roof, "in view of the pergola facing south and the probability of weather beating into the porch".<sup>45</sup> As this was against regulations, Walker had to live with the beating wind and rain.

New materials, functions and styles altered the character of Camberwell in the 1920s and 1930s. Even before the First World War some builders had begun to use concrete extensively. HR Crawford for example obtained a patent for hollow concrete construction in 1907 and erected houses in Canterbury and East Camberwell using this system.<sup>46</sup> In 1920 councillors inspected a new house built with the "Knitlock" technique in Malvern (a method of construction using pre-cast concrete modules). They already had an application for such an advanced design at the corner of Mont Albert Rd and Athol Ave and after seeing the Malvern house they withdrew objections to the method.<sup>47</sup>

Builders wanting to use concrete in construction faced seemingly arbitrary responses from building inspectors, until the new techniques became more familiar. LM Perrott, faced a muddled council hearing when he tried to put up a house in "Hydrostone" in 1920.<sup>48</sup> In 1923 JA McNaught was allowed to build a concrete house in Koyuga Rd off Balwyn Rd. E Smith built in concrete in Lunea St and later in the year, R Wilson was able to build in reinforced concrete in Athelstan Rd.<sup>49</sup> Siegwarts Beams and Cindcrete were given permission to build three houses in "Cindcrete" in Camberwell.<sup>50</sup> Later GE Purdy was allowed to build in concrete blocks in Highgate Grove Ashburton.<sup>51</sup> Hume Steel then erected a test house in concrete blocks.<sup>52</sup> And W Thomson Pty Ltd were permitted to build in pre-cast concrete slabs in Summerhill Rd. In 1933 Camberwell had 72 concrete houses. By 1961 the number had risen to 821.

Camberwell cautiously adjusted to concrete buildings. At the same time and in much the same manner, building inspectors and residents were at first wary of the houses put up by the War Service Homes Commission from 1920 onwards.<sup>53</sup> In 1920 council allowed the Commonwealth Bank to erect a standard design as an example and later permitted several of these houses in Surrey Hills. Building inspectors soon complained that the new designs had no proper drainage "which was merely shot out onto the

adjoining land".<sup>54</sup> Despite such objections, the War Service Homes Commission launched into an extensive building program in Camberwell during the 1920s. Another state agency, the State Savings Bank also erected houses in Camberwell, again after an initial "test case". One Type 36 SSB house was erected in Prospect Hill Rd in 1926.<sup>55</sup>

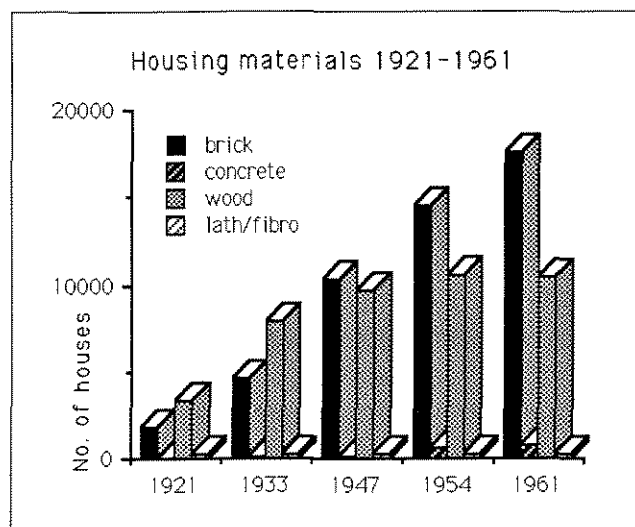


Fig 2.4: Camberwell; house materials 1921-61  
Source: *Census of Australia, 1921-61*

By 1926 there were 339 SSB financed houses in Camberwell and more than 1000 in 1938, all of them built to approved plans.<sup>56</sup> After the Second World War, state builders made even more dramatic inroads into Camberwell.

The Housing Commission of Victoria acquire land in North Balwyn in 1947, but after protests from local builders and residents the scheme was scaled down. The Commission announced that on the western side of Balwyn Rd, it would not acquire land since "the number of houses at present being erected there was sufficient to justify leaving the area to private enterprise to develop".<sup>57</sup>

"Another 'land grab' on" warned the *Argus* on 31 May 1947, reporting a huge "Slum Reclamation" in Burwood. Councillor RC Cooper accused the Commission of "compulsorily acquiring land and paying only 35 per cent of the value". Eventually after the Premier (John Cain Snr) intervened, the Commission abandoned much of this land. In Ashburton the Housing Commission did proceed with a new estate. In 1947

Mr Barry, Minister for Housing, announced plans to build 930 Housing Commission dwellings on 180 acres at Ashburton. To the west of the Outer Circle railway line the Commission would build 108 brick houses and 52 brick veneer. On the east of the railway fifty percent were to be concrete.<sup>58</sup> These two and three bedroom houses, rented at first by former residents of Melbourne's inner industrial suburbs, differed from many of the private houses of Camberwell. They faced a street lay-out quite distinct from the grid of private subdivisions. In appearance and in social character, the Alamein Estate brought a distinctive colour to sedate Camberwell.

### Flats

The Housing Commission posed a threat to the exclusive suburbia of Camberwell. The private flat threatened even greater evils. While the first purpose-built flats in Melbourne dated from before the First World War, Camberwell's distance from the city kept flat-builders at bay. By the end of the 1920s flats had appeared in neighbouring suburbs and after the depression they were poised to invade Camberwell. The "Conquering flat [warned an *Argus* editorial] is springing up like mushrooms".

In Melbourne as a whole there were 1500 private homes built in 1933-34 and 1110 flats. Modern women with no interest in housework; a dearth of servants; rising building costs; loss of investments in depression; these were the most frequently-cited causes of the flat boom. "The old pride of women in a home of their own and the old pride of men in their suburban gardens" vanished with the flat. More dangerously, flats would "cramp the moral outlook" and rob people of an "intimacy with nature". By 1934, "the architectural amenities of the suburbs" amongst them Camberwell, were "menaced by the invader".<sup>59</sup>

Yet the first flats appeared in Camberwell much earlier. FA Darling wanted to convert a house in Union Rd into self-contained flats in 1920. Designers of duplex housing were reminded of by-laws preventing semi-detached housing in Camberwell in the 1920s but they still were able to erect such buildings.<sup>60</sup> Council often softened its stance and issued permits for flats.<sup>61</sup> In 1932 builders were refused permission to build flats in Mangarra Rd

but later in the year flats were permitted on Lot 8 Burke Rd and in Mangan St.<sup>62</sup> The builders in Mangan Rd, FJ and FN LeLeu (FJ was a councillor for some years and the firm had a yard and office in Whitehorse Rd) erected two blocks of two-storey flats, satisfying building regulations by remaining eight feet from the boundary of their property. Later applications often failed because the builders were really creating semi-detached buildings and not distinct blocks of flats. However in April 1933, an existing building was subdivided into four flats at 18 Derby Rd and the LeLeus continued to build new blocks of flats in Balwyn. JS Lockhart applied to build flats in Stanhope Gve, Christowel St and Lorne Gve.

These plans and others for flats near Stanhope Gve resulted in objections from neighbours and council began to look more closely at schemes for flats in existing residential areas, although as in the case of flats on "Wrigley's Land" near Lorne Gve, councillors found they could not prevent the building going ahead.<sup>63</sup> Soon afterwards however an application for flats in Broadway was refused.<sup>64</sup>

Builders increasingly turned to flats in Camberwell during the 1930s so that in 1937 of permits for three thousand building in Camberwell, more than 500 were for flats, altogether 1785 units.<sup>65</sup> In 1938 Camberwell home-owners feared that their suburb would suffer the same mushrooming of flats, "two-storey monstrosities", as had Toorak, Hawthorn and St Kilda. More than one hundred members of Camberwell's fourteen progress associations met with councillors to suggest regulations for a flat by-law. Mrs Eaton, representing local women's associations claimed that all flats must have "ample ventilation, air, space and light". Other residents totally opposed "flats, maisonettes and pairs" in Camberwell. Councillor Le Leu, the prolific builders of flats, proposed a by-law in which single-storey flats would be limited to 25 per cent of a block and two-storey flats to 20 per cent. All flats were to have a minimum of 50 feet frontage and a total area of 7000 square feet.<sup>66</sup> The war-time decline in building ended the threat of flats and by the time of their revival of the 1960s, new by-laws restricted their invasion of Camberwell.

## Summary

New building types such as flats, state agencies like the SSB and the War Services Homes Commission, new "functional" materials such as concrete, all changed the character of parts of Camberwell. The suburb has a range of houses of differing age and style. Camberwell's biggest building booms occurred in the second halves of the 1920s and 1930s and most of the suburb is coloured by the exotic, sometimes fantastic styles of these years.

Yet for all this diversity, some could find the suburbs of inter-war and indeed post-war Camberwell dull. George Johnston settled in Britten St, Glen Iris after his marriage to Elsie Taylor.<sup>67</sup> In his character David Meredith, Johnston ridiculed the new estates of Glen Iris, where his three-roomed villa "stank of cement mortar, raw floorboards, fresh paint, damp putty, and insulated electric wiring".<sup>68</sup> He placed his young protagonist in a characteristic inter-war subdivision, Beverley Grove Estate, Glen Iris. Built cheaply, the estate had only three basic house designs; yet mixing these gave an illusion of diversity:

*there was no two houses in any one street, grove, crescent, drive, or avenue which could be said to really look alike. The design of the chimney, the style of the front door . . .*

Climbing onto the roof of his home, Meredith found:

*there was nothing at all around me . . . as far as I could see, but a plain of dull red rooftops in their three forms of pitching and closer at hand the green squares and rectangles of lawns intersected by ribbons of asphalt.*<sup>69</sup>

Johnston painted this Glen Iris subdivision as a "red and arid desert"; along with other critics of Australian suburbia he saw the uniformity and cheap decoration of Beverley Gve as a metaphor for the aridity and fake individuality of suburban life. Robin Boyd, on the other hand, was dismayed by a chaos in which one householder after another strove to make each home and each element within it distinctive. What struck the young author as uniformity appeared as featurist lack of order to the Modernist architect. Between the literary figure's conformity and the architect's chaos stand the houses of Camberwell,

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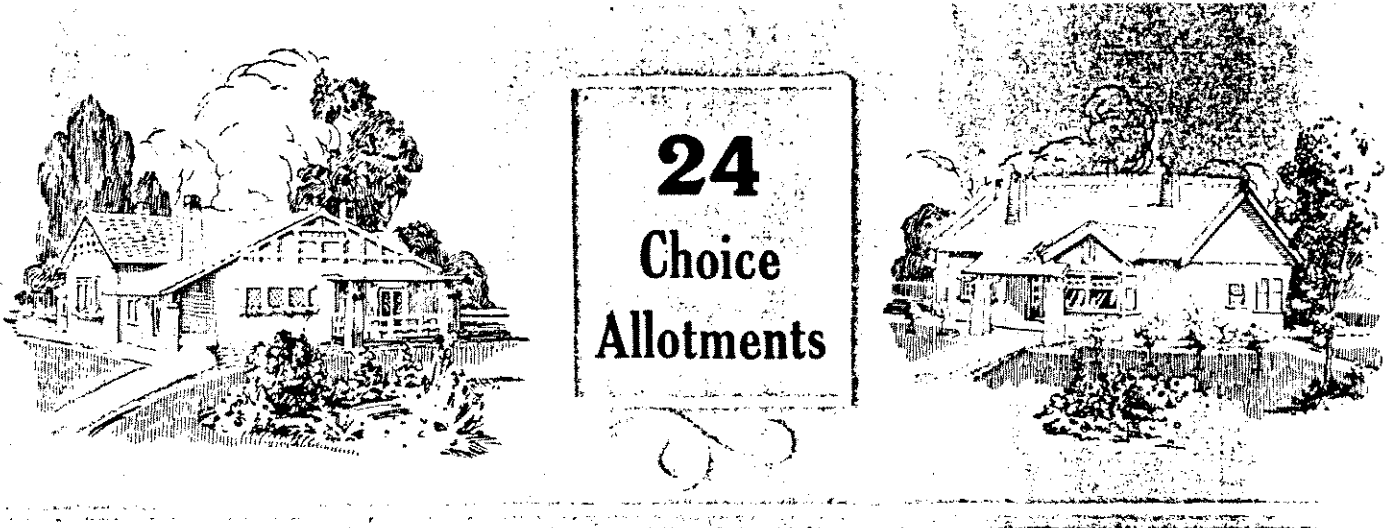
each one drawing on the whimsy of a young couple, the profit margin of a subdivider, the regulations of council, and the mass production of style and taste. As the following chapter indicates, each represents a changing order in domestic life. When placed against these historical circumstances, the mundane dwellings of twentieth-century Camberwell can have as much if not more interest than the grand mansions of the 1880s. Each generation of suburban housing deserves to be considered in any plan for conservation in the suburb.

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- <sup>1</sup> Robin Boyd, *The Australian Ugliness*, first published 1960, Sun Ed. 1963, p 24.
- <sup>2</sup> Blainey, *Camberwell*, p 9.
- <sup>3</sup> Sands and McDougall, *Melbourne Directory*, 1880.
- <sup>4</sup> *Census of Victoria*, 1881, Inhabitants and Houses. On farmhouses see the following chapter.
- <sup>5</sup> Building Citations, Camberwell Conservation Study.
- <sup>6</sup> *Victoria and Its Metropolis*, vol 1, Melbourne 1888, p 569.
- <sup>7</sup> On suburbanisation in general see Mark Girouard, *Cities and people*, New Haven 1985 (use index) and on Melbourne in particular see Graeme Davison, *The rise and fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, Melbourne 1978, especially chps 7-8; on immigration see pp 10-11, 153-4.
- <sup>8</sup> A Lodewycks, *Domestic Architecture in Victoria*, 1988, p 92.
- <sup>9</sup> "Garden roofs and courts" *Real Property Annual*, 1920, p 36 and see Boyd, *Australia's Home*, Melbourne 1987, pp 45-7.
- <sup>10</sup> Boyd, op cit, p 171.
- <sup>11</sup> Sunnyside Estate advertisements (CLHC) and G Tibbits, "The so-called Melbourne Domestic Queen Anne", *Historic Environment*, vol 2 no 2, 1982, p 6.
- <sup>12</sup> See fig.
- <sup>13</sup> *Royal Commission on Housing Conditions, Victorian Parliamentary Papers*, 1917, vol 2, minutes of evidence, q 2308.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, q 2312.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, q 2319.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, q 2327.
- <sup>17</sup> *Home and garden beautiful*, 1 August 1915.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 1 December 1915.
- <sup>19</sup> *The Australian home builder*, 15 June 1925.
- <sup>20</sup> *The Australian home beautiful*, 1 August 1930.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 1 July 1930.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 1 July 1930, pp 34-5, p 56 and 11 May 1930, p 63.
- <sup>23</sup> *Report of the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission*, 1929, p 202.
- <sup>24</sup> Council minutes, Annual report of the Building Surveyor, 30 September 1936.
- <sup>25</sup> *Argus*, 8 October 1936.
- <sup>26</sup> Council minutes, 25 August 1889.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 30 November 1896 and 18 January 1897.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 17 January 1898, 28 February 1898, 21 December 1898.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 5 November 1900 and 10 December 1900.
- <sup>30</sup> *Victorian Government Gazette*, 14 April 1899, p 1252.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 2 February 1915.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 23 February 1915. See, on the housing reforms of the period, David Harris, "Not above politics: housing reform in Melbourne 1910-1929" in R Howe, ed., *New houses for old: fifty years of public housing in Victoria 1938-1988*, Melbourne 1988, pp 1-19.
- <sup>33</sup> Council minutes, 13 September 1915.
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- <sup>34</sup> *Argus*, 28 February 1924.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 22 October 1923.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 27 May 1925.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 25 May 1925.
- <sup>38</sup> Council minutes, 7 November 1928. (By-law 64 replaced By-law 53 in 1936; minutes 3 February 1936).
- <sup>39</sup> *Argus*, 27 September 1928.
- <sup>40</sup> See fig 2.4.
- <sup>41</sup> Council minutes, 8 March 1926.
- <sup>42</sup> Subdivision plans.
- <sup>43</sup> Council minutes, 7 May 1928.
- <sup>44</sup> *Argus*, 7 June 1938.
- <sup>45</sup> Council minutes, 4 April 1932.
- <sup>46</sup> M Lewis, *Two hundred years of concrete in Australia*, Nth Sydney 1988, p 25.
- <sup>47</sup> Council minutes, 16 February 1920.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 19 April 1920.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 11 June 1923 and 19 November 1923.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 5 October 1925.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 22 November 1926.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 29 October 1928.
- <sup>53</sup> See E Scott, *Australia during the War, vol 11 of The official history of Australia in the war of 1914-1918*, Sydney 1941, pp 839-841.
- <sup>54</sup> Council minutes, 3 May 1920 and 14 June 1920.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 8 February 1926.
- <sup>56</sup> *State Savings Bank, annual reports, VPP*, various dates.
- <sup>57</sup> *Argus*, 11 April 1947.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 10 October 1946.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 13 August 1934.
- <sup>60</sup> See Council minutes, 17 May 1920 and 22 February 1926.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 8 March 1926.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 3 October 1932, 30 May 1932.
- <sup>63</sup> *Argus*, 21 August 1933.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 18 September 1933.
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 10 December 1937.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 23 March 1938.
- <sup>67</sup> G Kinnane, *George Johnston: a biography*, Melbourne 1986, p 27.
- <sup>68</sup> George Johnston, *My Brother Jack*, First Published 1964, Fontana edition 1967, p 225.
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid*.
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■ 2.1 "The Camberwell environment" 1930



## ENVIRONMENT.

If people would think back more often, and carefully weigh the value and effects of their early surroundings, they would take every care that, for the sake of the kiddies, their home would be pitched in a good district.

**CAMBERWELL** has had the seal "Select Residential City" set on it long ago, and Camberwell South at Hartwell is one of its most charming areas, this, added to the fact that it has

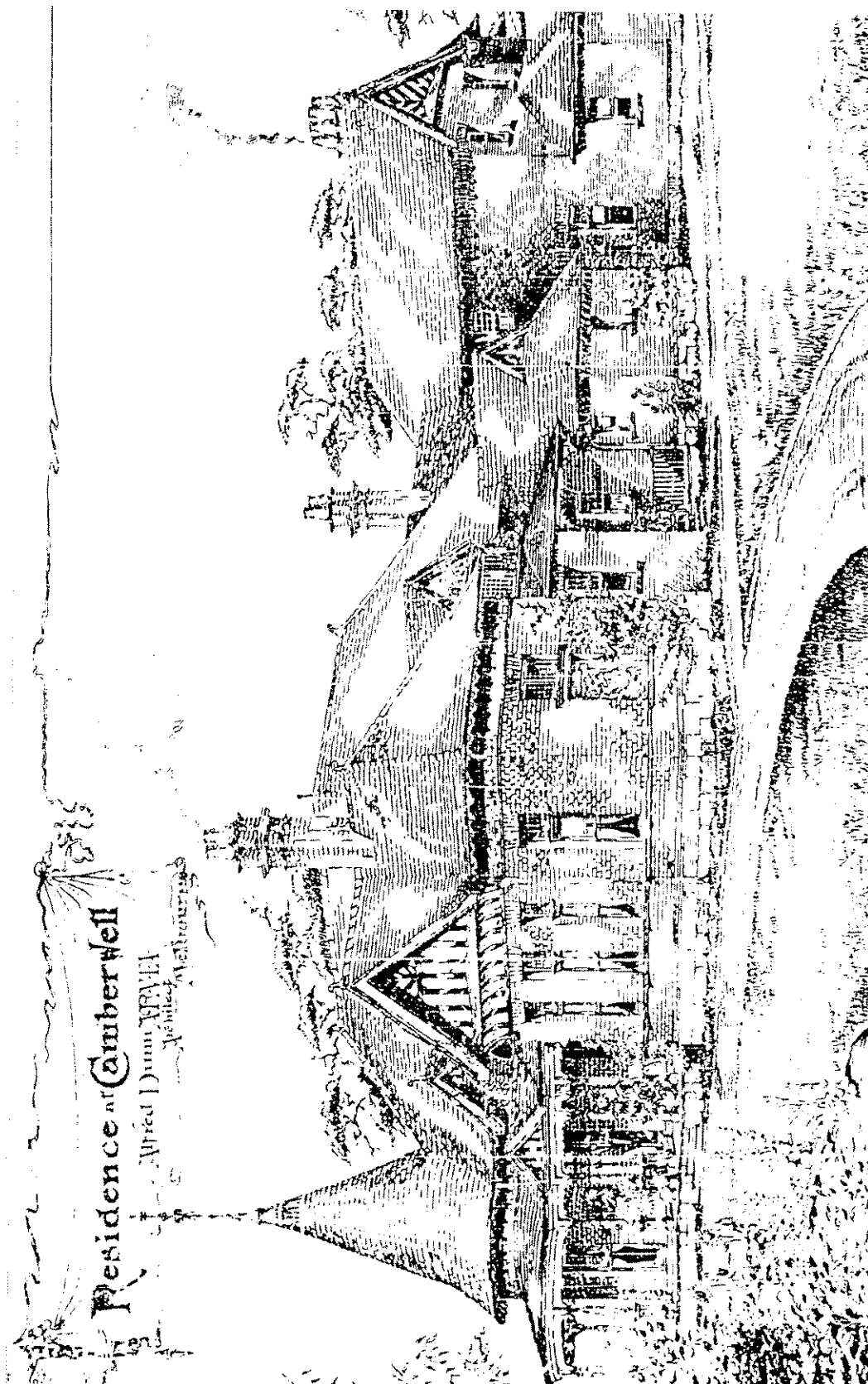
### DIRECT ELECTRIC ROAD SERVICE

to Swanston Street, makes it compare more than favorably with its sister city—Malvern—the difference in particular being that you will probably get the land you require in Camberwell for half the money you will be asked in Malvern.

**SUMMERHILL ESTATE** was the Old Home of Camberwell's Veteran Councillor, Mr. Edward Dillon, and its charming and central situation has always been the comment of his visitors—

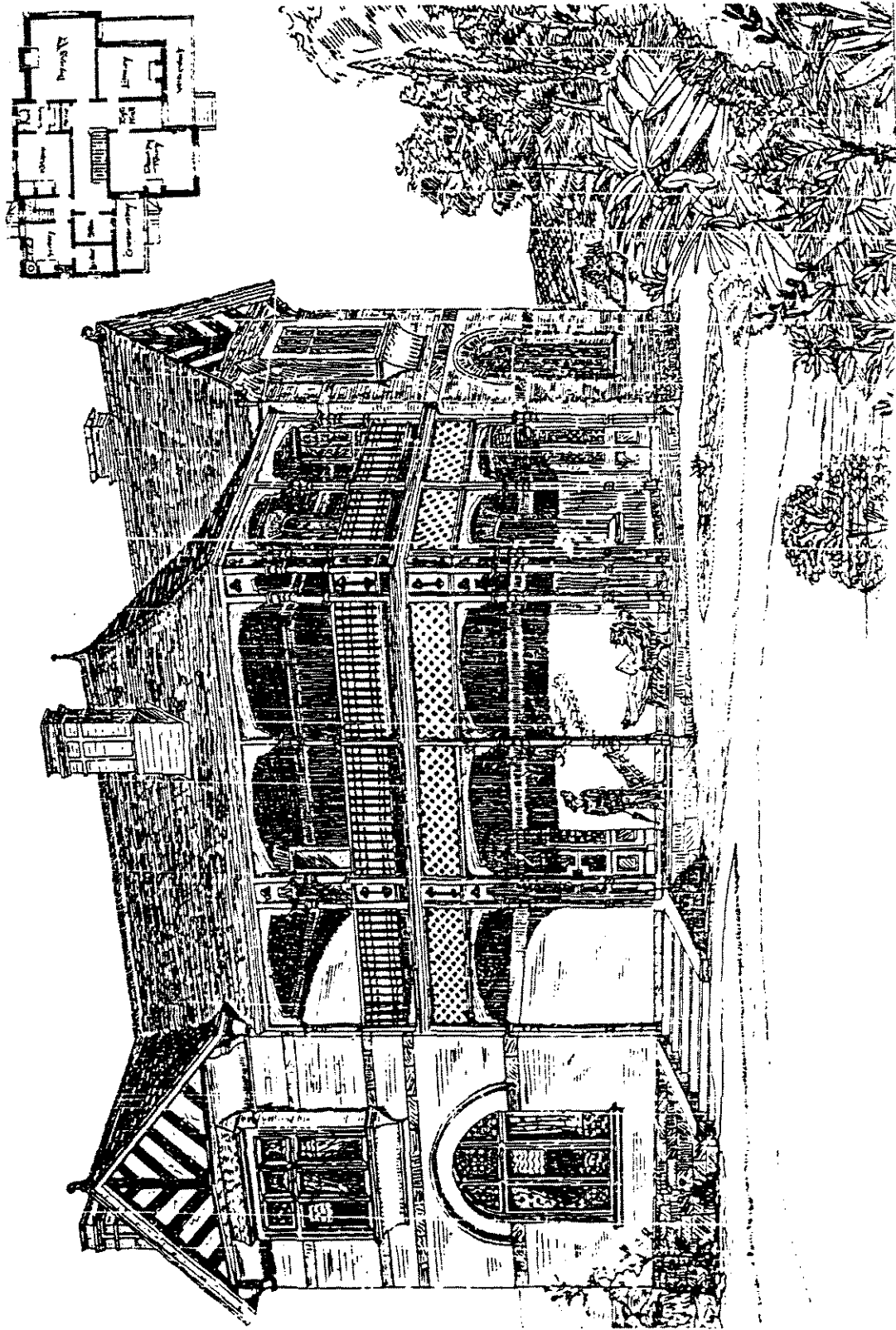
**NOW** it is on the market, subdivided into choice building allotments, and if you want to build a home in a happy, healthy, picturesque spot, you must for your own sake inspect Summerhill Estate.

2.2 The Camberwell villa in the 1890s:  
A Queen Anne design by Alfred Dunn

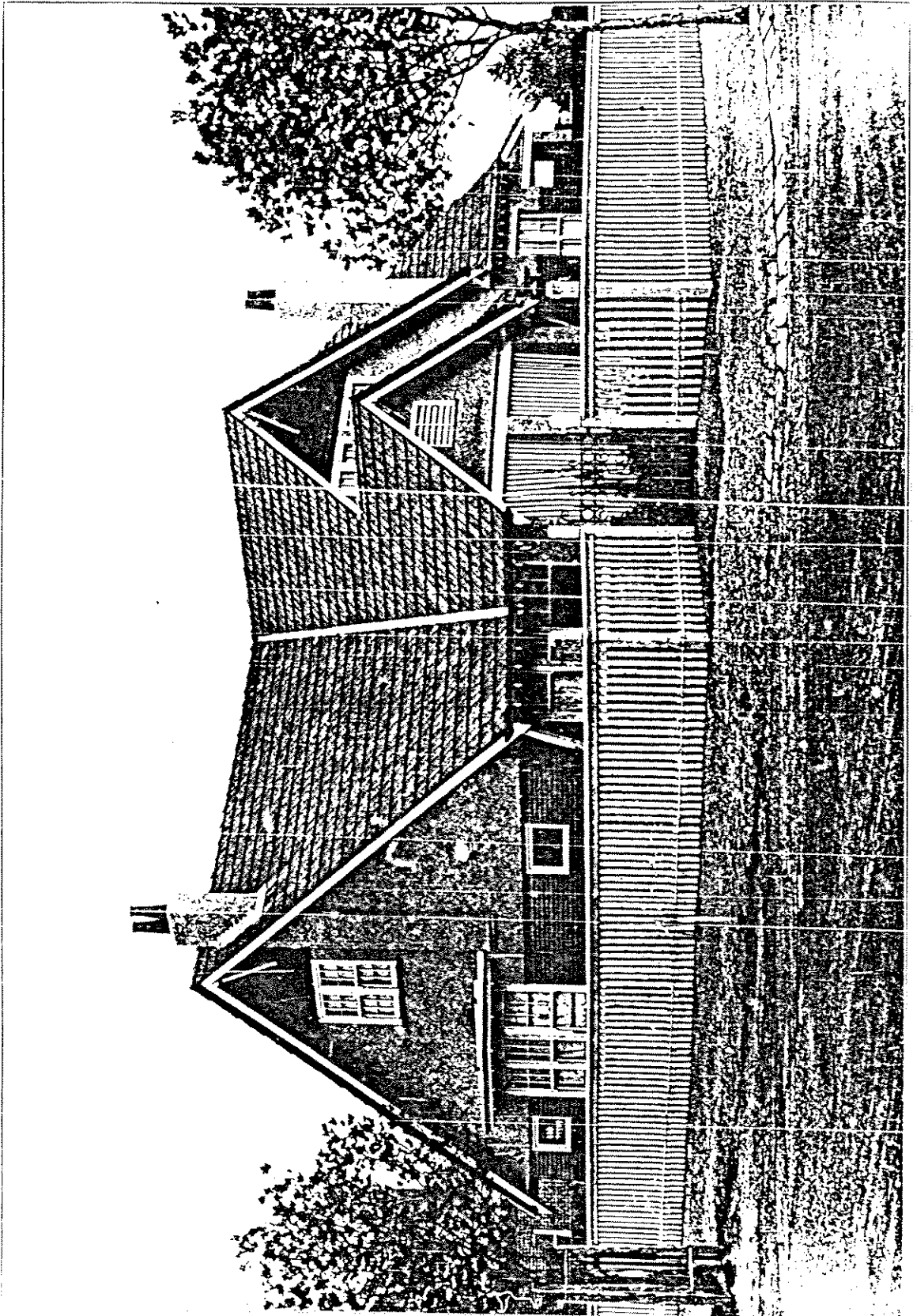




■ 2.3 Queen Anne in Balwyn 1892



■ 2.4 New suburbia; Broadway 1915



2.5 The Bijou style Camberwell 1922

**OUR INSTRUCTIONS ARE SELL!!**

**Saturday Next, 16th September, 1922**

At 3 o'clock, on the premises  
**"Dawn" 66 Stewart Street,**  
 5 minutes' walk from two electric tram routes (4<sup>th</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Section)  
**CAMBERWELL**

**COGHILL & HAUGHTON**

(in conjunction with F. G. WOODS & Co.)

Acting under instructions received from Mrs. M. G. Chestlin  
 will SELL SUPERIOR

**Modern Bijou Villa**



(As per photo)

Of attractive design, specially constructed to Vendor's order about 5 years ago, roofed with red tiles and containing 6 rooms and "outsleeping" dormer, the approximate dimensions of which are Living room 21 x 11, Dining room 15 x 12'6", Drawing room 13'6" x 12, Bedrooms 14'6" x 12'6", 13'6" x 12'6", Maid's room 10 x 8, Kitchen 13 x 11, (gas stove), Linen press, Bathroom with rolled edge bath and fuel heater, glass-enclosed back verandah, Large Shed suitable for a

**GARAGE**

The fittings throughout are good, gas and electricity is connected, and the property both internally and externally is in faultless order.

**LAND 50 x 100 through to a made road**

Has an Easterly aspect and is nicely laid out in garden and lawn with Cypress hedge etc. The view from the property is unquestionably one of the finest obtainable from the heights of Camberwell.

**TITLE CERTIFICATE**

TERMS LIBERAL—About £200 deposit required.

Further particulars and orders to view obtainable from

**AUCTIONEERS:**

**COGHILL & HAUGHTON**

79 SWANSTON STREET, MELBOURNE.

And at Heidelberg and Canterbury

Telephones—Central 2793, Heidelberg 34, Canterbury 59.

or

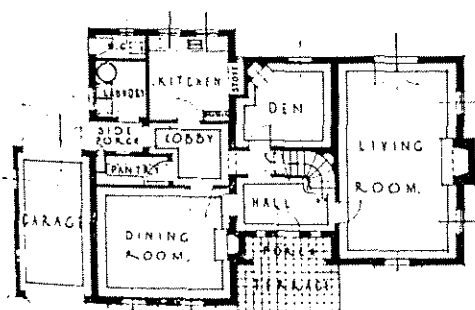
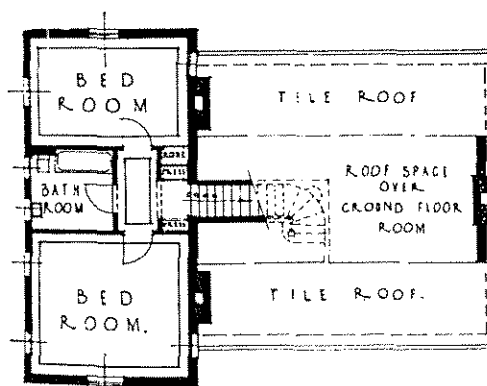
**F. G. WOODS & Co.**

Estate Agents, 394 Burke Road, Camberwell

Telephone—Hawthorn 1727

V. H. Wilson, Printer, Canterbury

2.6 An architect's home in Camberwell, designed and lived in by OA Yuncken; in the English cottage style



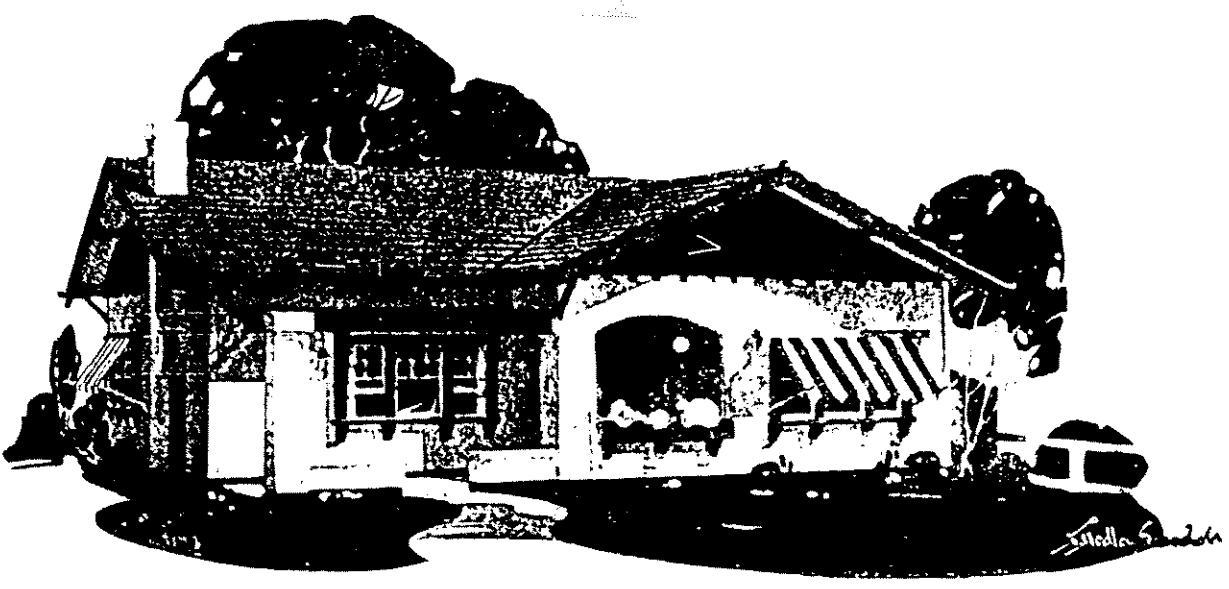
Ground and first floor plans.

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■ 2.7 Neo-Georgian mansion Camberwell in the 1930s



2.8 The 1930s style of Camberwell



*A charming design in apple green & cream*

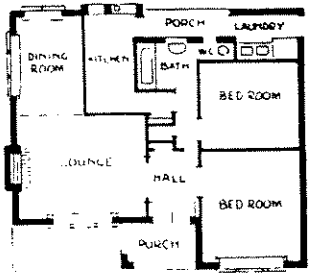
ORRONG CRESCENT, CAMBERWELL

CAN we say more of the exterior of this home? It is here before you just as it stands on the beautiful Golf Links Estate, Camberwell. Built in brick and roughcast, grey tiled roof and green-striped sun blinds. The land is 55 x 140. The interior is naturally in harmony. Bevelled glass folding doors in several rooms strike a distinctive note, while sand-finished walls in fawn link perfectly with the dark-finished woodwork. The bathroom and kitchen are finished in art marble.

From the dining-room, which is windowed on two sides, the broad expanse of the Golf Links Park can be enjoyed. The land, of course, adjoins this reserve.

Internal and external sewerage, electric hot-water service, ample well planned cupboard space, and horizontal gas stove make this five-room home worthy of your inspection. It is entirely ready for occupation, and is one of many being erected on the Golf Links.

Do you know the Golf Links Estate? It is without question the finest land around the Camberwell district. It is served by two trams direct to the City, and also by the railway, which passes through the Golf Links station—right on the Estate.



*We will be pleased to see you at any time—week-ends especially.*

*and the price complete — £1500*

We can arrange any terms. A cheque for £100 will secure this residence for you. Interest on the balance is 7 per cent.

**MUNRO AND NICOLSON**  
9 ORRONG CRESCENT  
CAMBERWELL  
GOLF LINKS ESTATE  
Phone . . . . . W2458

2.9 North Balwyn Home

RESIDENCE AT BALWYN FOR W. E. BATES ESQ  
Hyndman and Bates. Archts



From the North West



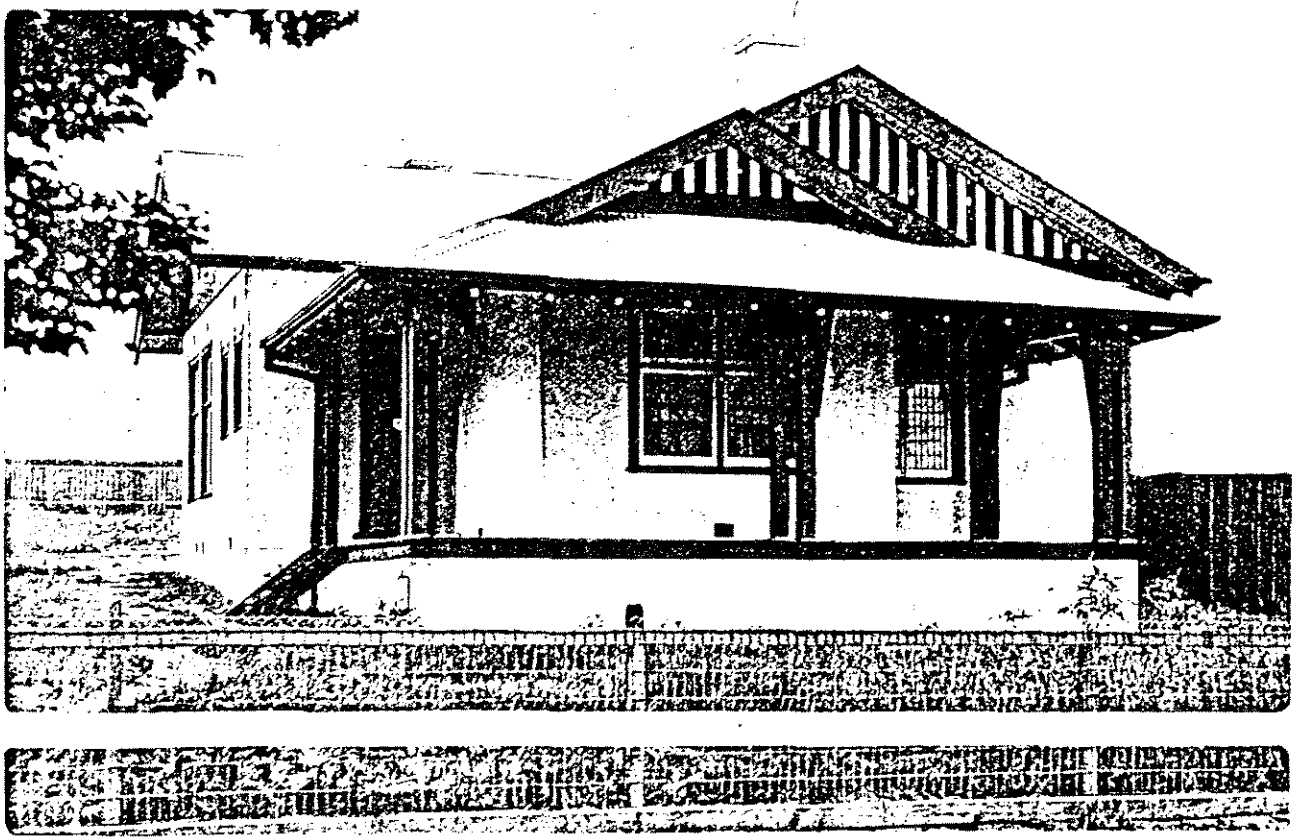
From the North East

- 2.10 The concrete house in Camberwell; Athelstan Rd, East Camberwell

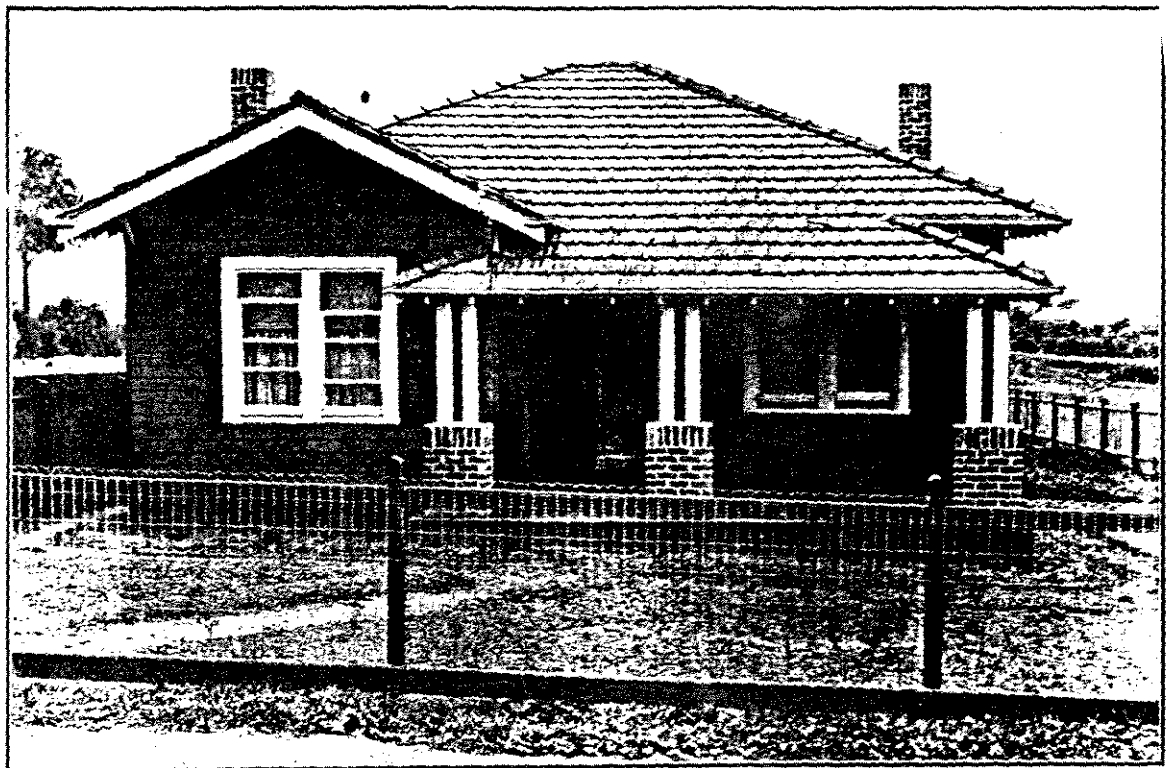




■ 2.11 Reinforced concrete house Canterbury Rd



2.12 State Savings Bank styles 1922



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■ 2.13 The English cottage in Camberwell, built the State Savings Bank



## Chapter Three

# DOMESTIC LIFE

Camberwell is amongst the few genuine dormitory suburbs of Melbourne. In suburbs like Camberwell, the separation of “home” and “work”, of “women’s work” and “men’s work” and of the city and the suburbs became increasingly marked.<sup>1</sup>

Modest farmhouses, substantial mansions set in vast private gardens, villas in late-Victorian and Edwardian Camberwell and the varied homes of the inter-war and post-war suburb can all be distinguished by their styles (as discussed in the preceding chapter). As well, through their scale, arrangement of internal space and use of gardens and outbuildings, they demonstrate distinctive domestic routines. This chapter traces each of these phases in local building and explores the manner in which different uses of dwelling space demonstrate important changes in domestic life, particularly in the roles of women.

### Farming households

Even at the end of the 1880s property boom, much of the land in the municipality was still under cultivation or carrying grazing stock. Farm buildings and outhouses were usually constructed of weatherboards with iron roofing. Most often only the detached or semi-detached kitchen and wash-house were built of stone and later brick to reduce the risk to the main house of fire.

The architecture of daily life and labour for the mother and daughter on a Balwyn dairy farm at the turn of the century was typical of that on homesteads before gas, electricity and labour-saving devices arrived. One member of a Balwyn farming household recalled that there were “no bathrooms in any of the houses so we had to have a big tub, in front of the fire . . . just once a week”. Located in the only living room, was “a big log fire with a kettle hanging on a [hook] and the old black pot and a little Colonial Oven” in which women did much of the cooking for a family of eight and five farmhands. The farmer’s children left school at or before the legal age of thirteen, the boys to assist the adult men with milking and general farmwork. Girls to share the household cleaning, shopping, cooking and laundry work with their mother, as well as the

“women’s work” in the dairy, separating cream and churning butter: “We made everything, pickles, sauces; you couldn’t go out and buy tinned soups you know”. Ironing was done with a set of flat irons heated in turn on a hob over the fire. “We thought we were made when we had a box iron”, heated with coals from the blacksmith’s furnace and put to work immediately on the heavy starched household linen.<sup>2</sup> In the farmhouse, every member contributed to the household economy and the roles of women and children were central to well-being. Not surprisingly, the brick kitchens were often the most well-constructed sections of the house.

### Gentlemen’s mansions

From the mid-1850s to the 1870s, the finest homes in Boroondara were designed and built by “true master builders” for successful city businessmen, lawyers and members of other leading professions. These status symbols, scattered widely across Camberwell, were colonial interpretations of the grand country houses of the English gentry. They were erected by teams of tradesmen and labourers on the crests of gentle hills, to mark their owners’ rise to the social heights. Classically or romantically inspired, their internal lay-out followed a uniform pattern. Most were double-storeyed, usually with a cellar, and a slate roof, most often hidden by a parapet. They were constructed on basalt footings and from the ground floor up, the fourteen-inch thick load-bearing brick walls were of locally-made Blacks with a thick grey-tinted cement render, imitating stone edifaces of the “Old Country”. The internal walls of the main body of the house and high ceilings in huge main rooms were lined with plaster and decorated in an unpretentious manner. The service rooms were universally unlined and drab.<sup>3</sup>

The living and entertaining rooms were located on the ground floor and the family and guest rooms above. The servants’ rooms and service area were on the upper and lower floors respectively of a separate wing attached to the rear of the house. Most often this service wing contained a separate narrower staircase to that in the main body of the house, so ensuring minimum contact between the master

and his toiling servants. This functional and spatial segregation also served to prevent the heat, steam and often unpleasant odours of the kitchen, laundry and scullery from penetrating the master's domain.

Coal or wood fires warmed the family's living and main bedrooms, although often the children's and most certainly the servants' rooms had no heating. The kitchen's huge wood-fired cooking ranges were a source of comfort to the domestic staff in the winter months and of great discomfort during Melbourne's summer. For all members of the household, merely to wash their hands was a time-consuming task. It required mixing, in the basin set in the bedroom washstand, cold water drawn at the scullery pump from underground tanks and hot water from a huge pot kept constantly at the boil on the kitchen range. Great quantities of hot water were hauled upstairs for the family's weekly bath, usually taken in a portable tub before the bedroom fire. In households where water or domestic help or both were in short supply, grey sudsy water from the laundry copper was recycled as bathwater, thus restricting bathday to washday.<sup>4</sup>

Sometimes immense areas of land surrounded these residences and these might be laid out much as were the landscaped picturesque gardens of eighteenth-century English gentlemen. Large exotic trees were set to the front and sides of the house on open verges grazed by sheep or hand-mown by gardeners using scythes. Larger estates might have an orchard and vineyard. A long gravelled return carriageway swept from the entrance to an imposing portico. The carriage houses, stables, a dairy, assorted outhouses and perhaps accommodation for stable and ground staff and their families were placed at the rear of the property, together with a kitchen garden and beds of flowers for cutting. So too was the forked clothes-line, propped on saplings. On this, maids would hoist bedlinen and clothing still heavy with moisture which even their strong wrists could not remove. A portable privy set above a cesspit was used only in the daylight hours, or before retiring for the night, by the light of a candle or oil lamp. China chamber pots were kept beneath the beds and emptied by the housemaid each morning.

Ideally the daily routine for the lady of the house was composed of the supervision of her household

staff. At other times she might choose menus, arrange flowers, write letters, perhaps do some fine needle work or else entertain visitors and return calls. Increasingly, her day included scouring the city agencies for suitable servants. Her husband, when not engaged in his business or profession, supervised the stable and groundstaff.<sup>5</sup>

### Later boom-era villas

The 1880s according to Graeme Davison saw "a resurgence of the sentimental cult of Home": from the aristocratic ideals of urban townhouse and county seat, "came the bastard ideal of suburbanism with its splendid promise of the advantages of country and city life combined".<sup>6</sup>

Although not generally as large as the early boom mansions, these later houses often outdid the mansions in ostentatious ornament. There was in contrast, little change in the internal and external arrangement of space, although the grounds of the villas were smaller.

Conservatories were popular at this time, most often housed under the main roof. The servants' working and sleeping quarters were still located in a separate rear wing with smaller rooms and windows. Perhaps because of the dearth of servants, or for the sake of family privacy, domestic help came from outside. Some 1890s homes had not even one maid's room.

### Shop dwellings

Around the turn of the century, domestic life was considerably more confined for the few shopkeepers and their families. The grocer, the butcher, the shoe-shop proprietor and the blacksmith each occupied a single-fronted and single-storeyed structure with an attached room at the rear, outhouses for cooking and washing, and a stable and a carriage shed in the yard behind. The double-fronted bakery on one corner of Balwyn and Whitehorse Rds had a side entrance to what was a three-roomed dwelling.<sup>7</sup> By the 1920s in the fast-growing shopping centres of Canterbury, Camberwell and Balwyn there were many double, even triple-storey commercial premises with family accommodation on the upper floors. Even these were undoubtedly more cramped and less well appointed than their customers' rambling farmhouses, mansions or villas.

### The servant problem

Much earlier than the municipality's well-to-do homebuilders and their architects were willing to admit, the lady of the house was grudgingly converted to housewifery. The maid's room was often included in house plans as late as the Second World War, for status reasons or in the vain hope that the servant problem would miraculously disappear. Often children, maiden aunt or aging parent occupied the maid's room or else it was used as a storeroom.

Scarcity of competent and reliable household staff had become an issue of gargantuan proportions for the middle class well before the turn of the century. At first the mistress of the house would surreptitiously assist her probably less-than-able servants with the cleanest and least arduous household chores. By 1901 only one hundred Melbourne households had five or more servants while eleven percent kept or rather attempted to keep one live-in maid, or "general".<sup>8</sup> Undoubtedly, Camberwell had a higher than average share of this limited supply, although women were advised that in "these days it is impossible to engage a good servant, however tempting the wages". Certainly there were not enough servants to fill Camberwell's several hundred lonely maid's rooms.<sup>9</sup>

It was surely not hard for young women to forego the tiny, drab, sparsely-furnished rooms in which most live-in servants spent their brief hours of rest, for the relative freedoms of the factory.<sup>10</sup> At least one highly stressed Camberwell servant girl attempted suicide.<sup>11</sup> A catalogue for an East Camberwell sale by auction of "the whole of the Household Furniture and Effects" listed amongst the "No 1 bedroom's" furnishings a full bedroom suite including a wardrobe, an Axminster carpet, kapok mattress and pillows and from the "Maid's Room" a grass mat, a horsehair mattress, a chest of four drawers and a large trunk, together with the only washstand in the house.<sup>12</sup> The family undoubtedly had handbasins and taps installed in their bedrooms, if not a bathroom for their exclusive use.

Daily help became more common in Camberwell after the Great War. Impoverished working-class women supplemented their husbands' meagre and irregular incomes by commuting daily to "do housework and pretty hard housework in Camberwell".<sup>13</sup> Even so,

middle-class women were advised that "the homemaker . . . knows she has a better chance of securing outside help if simplicity strikes the keynote in her household furnishings".<sup>14</sup> Some hopeful 1930s architects designed houses with a suite of private rooms for just one maid.<sup>15</sup> But from the eve of the Great War, others were attempting to persuade prospective homebuilders that "the servantless house is a dream everyone (or at least every woman) has had, but few of us have realised it".<sup>16</sup> From around the second decade of the century, the effect of this and several other influences can be seen in the floor plans of both the expensive, architect-designed villas and hundreds of modest bungalows and cottages erected on Camberwell's half-empty subdivisions.

### The housewife

Increasingly, not only the cooking and childcare but the washing, ironing and endless cleaning was being done by the women of the family. Just like the farmer's daughter, girls in suburban middle-class families were now expected to assist their mothers with housework. In 1913 the advice "Mrs Clarke" offered desperate women readers of the *Australian Home and Garden Beautiful* illustrated this dilemma:

*The difficulty in finding servants might entirely disappear if mother and daughter would face the situation and decide how to act on a well regulated system . . . it is not beneath any woman to take part in the service of her own home and the girls living in their father's house do not lose caste, even if they do open the front door and greet visitors as they enter.*<sup>17</sup>

Advice magazines were now referring to both "the housewife" and the expectation that she create a modern haven for her husband and children, "a place where one is ever anxious to spend one's time, and where life is found in all its homely beauty and sweetness."<sup>18</sup>

### Transforming domestic space

Well before the turn of the century, the average family size in Victoria had begun to shrink from about eight children to five, a change especially marked amongst the middle classes. At the same time, the size of the rooms in the average Camberwell house, and the heights of its ceilings shrank, partly in response

to rising building costs, but clearly also for ease of maintenance. By the 1920s, the overall size and style of the new middle-class family home, and the arrangement and function of its internal space, had undergone a dramatic transformation.

In this suburban sanctuary, "a combined bedroom and study for the male members of the family should be arranged". Housewives were encouraged to change the once dark and dreary kitchen for "a large, bright, cheerful room, with every labour saving device".<sup>19</sup> Before long, this room was brought closer to the dining room, perhaps a linking servery was introduced, and the auto-tray devised to reduce footwork for the cook-cum-hostess. Casual eating "nooks", breakfast rooms and intimate conversation "ingles" became increasingly popular. Built-in furniture gradually replaced cumbersome free-standing pieces under which dust gathered. The long unnecessary passages were replaced by small central lobbies or halls. Laundries and bathrooms were brought under the main roof with the advent of a reliable water supply. It was many years however, before a genuine labour-saving washing machine replaced the wood- or gas-fired copper, washboard, wringer and three troughs.

Furthermore, the former work of the family servant was now to be sanitised and its management rendered highly efficient in the hands of the modern housewife. According to a new breed of professionals (many of them women) — the so-called "experts" on everything from home design and furnishing to cooking and housework, science and technology were to govern the conduct of the suburban home.

Babies were now born at maternity hospitals and not in the "best bedroom" at home, and their early development supervised, first, by infant welfare sisters at the new Baby Health Centres and later by kindergarten directresses. Readers of popular women's magazines in the 1930s were typically advised to "always work to a schedule . . . It isn't original sin, it's original dirt we have to fight" became the ubiquitous homily of the era.<sup>20</sup> Typically, kitchen, laundry and bathroom walls were now lined, tiled and painted a bucolic white, and the rooms and their fittings polished and disinfected with new brand-name chemical concoctions.

In those houses connected to the MMBW sewerage system, the lavatory was gradually brought from its outhouse to the back door, beside or within the attached laundry, if not into the bathroom or an internal room of its own. In 1942 many older or modest newer Camberwell homes still relied on external WCs. Even several newer estates opened in the 1950s were unsewered. Surprisingly few of the affluent owned a "frigidare". Some kept perishable food fresh, delivered regularly to the house, in ice chests but many others had only a meat safe and /or larder.<sup>21</sup> Long after gas, "the modern genie", was supplied to the area, new Camberwell homes were still equipped with fuel cookers, a measure perhaps of distrust for the devil unknown. Once available, "Mr Electricity" was only slowly accepted as "a friend" - because of the fear of its dangers based on both carelessness and ignorance.<sup>22</sup> Domestic labour-saving devices were for many years expensive, far from efficient and in many cases quite unworkable. They tended to increase rather than lessen the workload of women who could afford them. New technology promised high standards of cleanliness. For housewives, even those with the new devices, these remained frustratingly unattainable. Before long the middle-class "Home of Delight" became the housewife's "gilded cage", in which the chores multiplied and unexpected callers were unwelcome until after the morning's routine was complete.<sup>23</sup>

### **The modern bungalow**

Inter-war bungalows were presented as proudly derivative of overseas designs. They were also proclaimed as ideally adapted to the Australian climate and lifestyle.<sup>24</sup> Yet many were singularly unsuited to Australia. The English Tudor style, so nostalgically popular in Camberwell, had attic bedrooms, soon found to be uncomfortably hot in a Melbourne summer. A more significant break with earlier styles came with the first moves towards open planning. Builders initially shaped the living space around a central vestibule. Glazed double doors rather than a single, solid door opened onto a short passageway. The combination of entrance, living and dining areas in one space often followed.

### **Fresh air and sun worship**

The fresh-air mystique gave Camberwell pride of place amongst Melbourne's dormitory suburbs. The benefits

of fresh air were not only physical and the medical profession insisted: "accept the statement that physical health means moral health, and an intellectual power of application and concentration otherwise unattainable".<sup>25</sup> By the 1920s, no self-respecting family could be seen to be without an "out-sleeping dormer" or "sleeping-out balcony". Where houses were built without these spartan, alternative bedrooms, an open verandah or porch was fitted out with a timber or fibro-cement half wall and fly-wire screen or a detached "sleepout" was erected in the back garden. As with the ubiquitous maid's room, these draughty fresh-air rooms were often used in a manner other than that originally intended. Sooner or later, most were fully enclosed and used as additional children's bedrooms or guestrooms. Was it not true that her Kiwi bridesmaid, Madge, "become a fixture in the verandah room" of Edna Everage's modest bungalow?<sup>26</sup> And on the rear "living porch" the householder could drink in the oxygen "at leisure and the small worries of life, the arguments, the differences, the petty jars of closed-in domesticity [were] . . . avoided by mutual consent". These verandahs were later expanded to become the patio or sun terrace in post-war homes.<sup>27</sup>

The sun was a "friend . . . to grow to robust and virile manhood and womanhood, children should inhale . . . pure fresh air permeated with solar light and solar heat".<sup>28</sup> Outdoor play (regardless of the weather), garden playhouses for children, and the growing popularity of outdoor furniture for adults symbolised not only increased leisure hours for the middle classes but the influence of popular "scientific" health philosophies. The conscious placement of the house on its block, and its larger window areas, to catch more of the winter sun, reflected this new solar worship. It stood in marked contrast to the dark and small-windowed Old World designs of the nineteenth and early-twentieth century.

### The suburban garden

From the early years of settlement to the 1940s and beyond, the use of external domestic space also changed. Many Camberwell householders still grew vegetables and fruit and kept fowls, caged pigeons, family cats and dogs and even silkworms.<sup>29</sup> The back yard was gradually transformed into the more habitable suburban back garden. Sanitation zealots also contributed

with their appeals to Melbourne householders to "clear away rubbish and filth which harbour germs, encourage flies, rats and cockroaches" from their rear yards.<sup>30</sup> The propped-up clothes-line was eventually replaced by the rotary hoist and the stables and carriage shed by the motor-car garage. A garden incinerator, regular garbage collections and improved drainage systems disposed of the household wastes. Typically, rear gardens were now divided into compartments with specific form and function.

Between the wars rigid, formal gardens gradually gave way to less formal "landscaped" arrangements. One advocate of the former argued that with:

*cut trees, trimmed hedges, geometrical beds and so on . . . a garden is a nobler creation . . . under the influence of art, we may add to its natural beauty [putting] a little of the soul of man into it.*

From the opposite camp came pleas for "nothing freakish, cut to resemble starfish or other ungracious forms . . . maybe a trim cypress hedge, although this has become a trifle commonplace of late". And in garden beds they advised avoidance of any "over-elaboration and tendency to primness".<sup>31</sup> For such design faults, even the prize-winning Camberwell gardens lost points in the 1930 Herald Garden Competition.<sup>32</sup> At about this time, less formal native plant displays were included in some suburban Melbourne gardens (if the expanded local sales of indigenous species is taken as a guide).<sup>33</sup> "Native plants that rival the rose" gained much less of a foothold in Camberwell however than in other Melbourne suburbs.<sup>34</sup> An occasional lonely specimen was planted, in defiance of the perceived monotony of Camberwell's carefully manicured gardens.<sup>35</sup> Nor did Edna Walling's flagstone paths and the "weedless, self-balancing, self-maintaining paradise so longed for by every motorist and sportsloving householder" appeal to the majority of Camberwell home and garden lovers.<sup>36</sup>

After all, their's was the heartland of the Melburnian rose-growing mania. Garden paths with standard rose bushes forming rigid thorny guards of honour for the unwary visitor. In 1900 the *Austral Cultivist* assured its readers that "the rose holds the premier position amongst flowers . . . it is the national -



may, more, it is the Empire's flower". It thus succeeded in warding off persistent challenges from the carnation, chrysanthemum, dahlia, lilly and later the gladioli. Undoubtedly the prize bloom growers of Surrey Hills Rose Club and their friendly rivals in Hawthorn would have agreed. Together they formed the National Rose Society of Victoria, "in affiliation with the English national body".<sup>37</sup>

The rear garden in the Camberwell districts as in other middle class suburbs, became increasingly the site of weekend leisure pursuits and private outdoor entertainment. For the affluent suburbanite, a tennis court became essential. The advent, however, of the home handyman's tool shed, the home gardener's potting shed along with the Californian-influenced patio, barbecue and, for some, a screened-off sunken swimming pool, shifted leisure focus from indoor to outdoor. The front garden became less private with the decline of the impenetrable wall of trimmed cypress hedge. At the same time it enhanced the street-facing aspect of the house and made it much more a vehicle for the display of social status and tidy respectability.<sup>38</sup>

### **Flat versus small home**

The Camberwell districts have always had a heavy sprinkling of the very modest homes of the lesser bourgeoisie - the successful tradesmen, small businessmen, white-collar workers and the professional family - on the way up or down the socio-economic ladder. From 1920, the Credit Foncier arm of the State Savings Bank financed home-ownership for many, providing loans on low deposits for "approved" house designs. Domestic life (in one of the 1084 small timber, concrete or brick homes built before 1939) was generally preferred to flat dwelling, that "exotic habit imported from Europe".<sup>39</sup> Even a tiny uninsulated jarrah or pine weatherboard, concrete or fibro-cement cottage on an unmade road at the extremity of a promised new tram service to the city and shops was more attractive than the tenancy of a confined but central and well-appointed brick flat.

Nevertheless as Susan Priestley notes, from the late-1880s, many of the areas mansions were converted into sharing institutions, apartment houses and boarding schools.<sup>40</sup> Unlike nearby Hawthorn, few terraces were built in Camberwell and relatively few semi-detached

dwelling. During the 1930s Depression and then in the war-time Camberwell, old houses were often set up as boarding houses for those seeking temporary rental accommodation.<sup>41</sup> According to a 1942 social survey of Melbourne's suburbs there were many instances of extended family occupation of old-fashioned and sometimes run-down houses in Camberwell.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless the council has encouraged single-family dwellings of high standard, on individual allotments, each one of a regulated size with solid, preferably brick, construction.

### **Public housing**

The demand for suburban public housing rose during the war years and soon after the war, small family dwellings were constructed by the Victorian Housing Commission on a new estate named for the Battle of El Alamein and located in the south-eastern corner of the municipality. Two-storeyed one and two bedroom flats were added later. Most of the houses are now owner-occupied and many of the 1950s flats provide much needed shelter for single-parent families. The current programme of "upgrading" is rendering these cramped and far from convenient multiple dwellings a little more comfortable. The lack of private outdoor space, however and particularly the stresses associated with sharing detached poorly equipped laundries and the rostering of clothesline space, will not be overcome in the short-term at least.<sup>43</sup> Although less stigmatised than the inner-city tower blocks of the 1960s, the Alamein Estate still stands in marked contrast to more spacious dwellings in the remaining districts of Camberwell.

### **Demolishing and extending**

Many of the municipality's domestic buildings have been demolished or altered out of recognition over the last one hundred years. Blocks of modern flats have been erected and even the Ministry of Housing flats are being modernised to meet minimum standards for domestic life in the 1990s. Many shop-dwellings have disappeared and hundreds of two- and five-roomed timber nineteenth-century cottages were destroyed "relocated", "refronted", "re-modelled" or extended during Camberwell's transformation from a farming district and gentleman's retreat into a middle-class suburb. Recently, a new wave of affluent, young middle-class homemakers moved in, imprinting their own ideas of domestic life on the suburb.<sup>44</sup>

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Alongside their restored period homes, dual tenancies pose a direct challenge to traditional use of space in the suburb.

### **Summary**

One hundred years ago, the internal space and activities of a Camberwell household were far different from those of today, even when the contemporary family inhabits the shell of a Victorian building. Shape and use of domestic space have altered as the mansions replaced farmhouses and boom villas were followed by the new designs of inter-war Camberwell. While the houses and gardens of each era had distinctive styles, equally important to us, is the manner in which their various forms can give even the most casual passer-by, an insight into the way family life has altered with each generation.

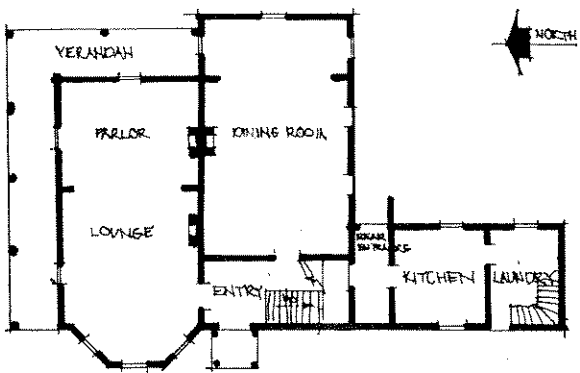
In spite of these changes individual dwellings, each set in a front and back garden, pockets of homogeneous housing and some multiple dwellings have remained remarkably untouched by the passage of time. Together, the relatively intact and the transformed represent both the entire range of domestic building types established in the City of Camberwell. As well, they record the changing nature of domestic life as lived in Camberwell.

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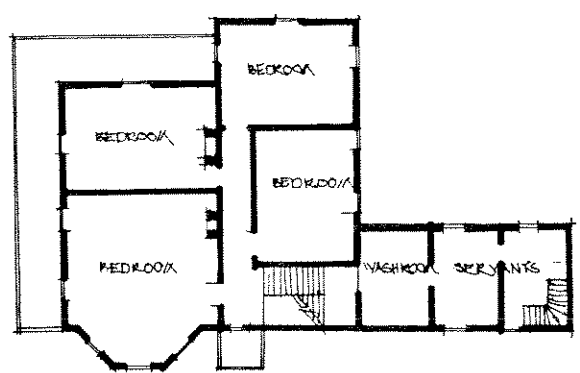
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- <sup>1</sup> K Reiger, *The disenchantment of home: modernizing the Australian family 1880-1940*, Melbourne 1985, pp 32-55
  - <sup>2</sup> Mrs Buchanan (nee Bovill) transcript of interview, 21 July 1965, CLHC.
  - <sup>3</sup> R Maple and J Webber, "Survey and discussion of notable domestic pre-boom architecture in the Camberwell area" (unpublished essay) Melbourne University Architecture Library.
  - <sup>4</sup> B Kingston, *My wife, my daughter and poor Mary Ann*, Sydney 1975, pp 29-42.
  - <sup>5</sup> Ibid, pp 29-42 and D Maclean, "Balwyn 1841-1941", pp 13-16.
  - <sup>6</sup> Davison, *Marvellous Melbourne*, p 137.
  - <sup>7</sup> Mrs Buchanan (nee Bovill), transcript of interview, p 1 and McLean, "Balwyn", p 16.
  - <sup>8</sup> Priestley, *Making their mark*, p 145.
  - <sup>9</sup> *Real property annual*, 1917.
  - <sup>10</sup> Kingston, *My Wife, my daughter*, pp 56-73.
  - <sup>11</sup> Boroondara *Standard*, 1888.
  - <sup>12</sup> 30 Athol Ave, Coghill and Sons Collection.
  - <sup>13</sup> J McCalman, *Struggletown: public and private life in Richmond 1900-1965*, Melbourne 1985, p 85.
  - <sup>14</sup> "Setting the house in order", *Real property annual*, 1917 p 40.
  - <sup>15</sup> *Everylady's Journal*, 1 November 1930, p 410.
  - <sup>16</sup> Marcus Barlow, architect who designed many Camberwell houses, *Real property annual* 1917, p 63.
  - <sup>17</sup> "On home service", p 68.
  - <sup>18</sup> C Keeley, *Real property annual*, 1919, p 22.
  - <sup>19</sup> C Keeley, "Home and environment", *Real property annual*, 1919, p 22.
  - <sup>20</sup> *Everylady's journal*, 1 August 1930, p 125.
  - <sup>21</sup> Melbourne University Social Survey (Camberwell and districts) 1942, Melbourne University Archives.
  - <sup>22</sup> Promotional articles, RPA 1914, RPA, 1917, p 35 and *Australian Home Beautiful*, 1 January 1932, pp 12-3.
  - <sup>23</sup> *Everylady's Journal*, 1 August 1930, pp 124-5.
  - <sup>24</sup> See for example, "The English cottage in Australia", *Australian home beautiful*, 1 September 1930, p 20.
  - <sup>25</sup> Dr B Ham, *Everylady's journal*, 6 April 1912, p 206.
  - <sup>26</sup> "Dame Edna Everage" [Barry Humphries], *My gorgeous life*, South Melbourne 1989, p 208 and local residents interviewed November 1989.
  - <sup>27</sup> *Home and garden beautiful*, 1 June 1915, p 872.
  - <sup>28</sup> *Everylady's journal*, 6 May 1912, p 270.
  - <sup>29</sup> *Austral culturist*, 1900.
  - <sup>30</sup> *Everylady's journal*, November 1912, p 649.
  - <sup>31</sup> *Real property annual*, 1914, pp 66-7 and p 25.
  - <sup>32</sup> *Melbourne Herald*, 28 March 1930.
  - <sup>33</sup> The Canterbury Horticultural Society held native plant sections in annual displays and actively encouraged local growers.
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- <sup>34</sup> *Australian home beautiful*, 1 January 1930, pp 40-1, p 60 and 1 July 1930, pp 30-1, p 64.
- <sup>35</sup> In *My brother Jack*, George Johnston had Jack's brother David plant a gum in his front lawn, as a signal of his revolt against the suffocating conformity of Beverley Grove.
- <sup>36</sup> Advocated by one Melbourne architect in the *Australian home beautiful*, 1 January 1930, pp 28-9, pp 40-1, p 60 and 1 July 1930, pp 30-1, p 64.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, January p 3.
- <sup>38</sup> Boyd, *Australia's home*.
- <sup>39</sup> "Flats and flat life", *Real property annual* 1913, p 60.
- <sup>40</sup> Priestley, *Making their mark*, p 146.
- <sup>41</sup> Interview with A Lyons, Surrey Hills, 25 November 1989.
- <sup>42</sup> Social survey, Melbourne University 1942.
- <sup>43</sup> Interview with tenant worker, Alamein Estate of the Victorian Ministry of Housing and Construction, 27 November 1989.
- <sup>44</sup> See for example, property sales listings in *Real estate property annual*, local and daily newspapers and Coghill and Son Collection from 1880s to 1980s.
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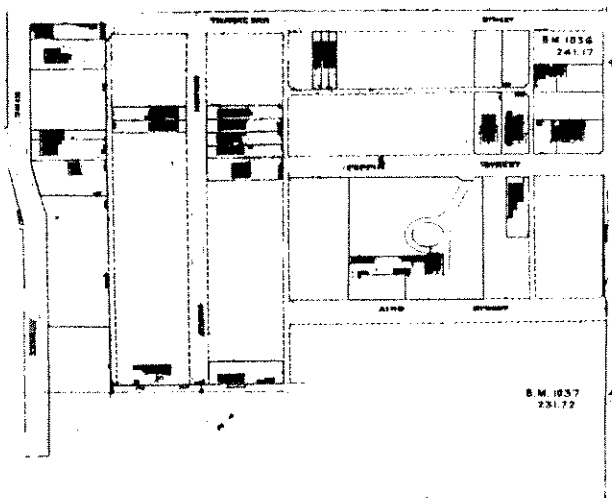
3.1 The Camberwell Mansion; St. John Wood ("Wanganella")  
Surrounds and ground and first floor plan



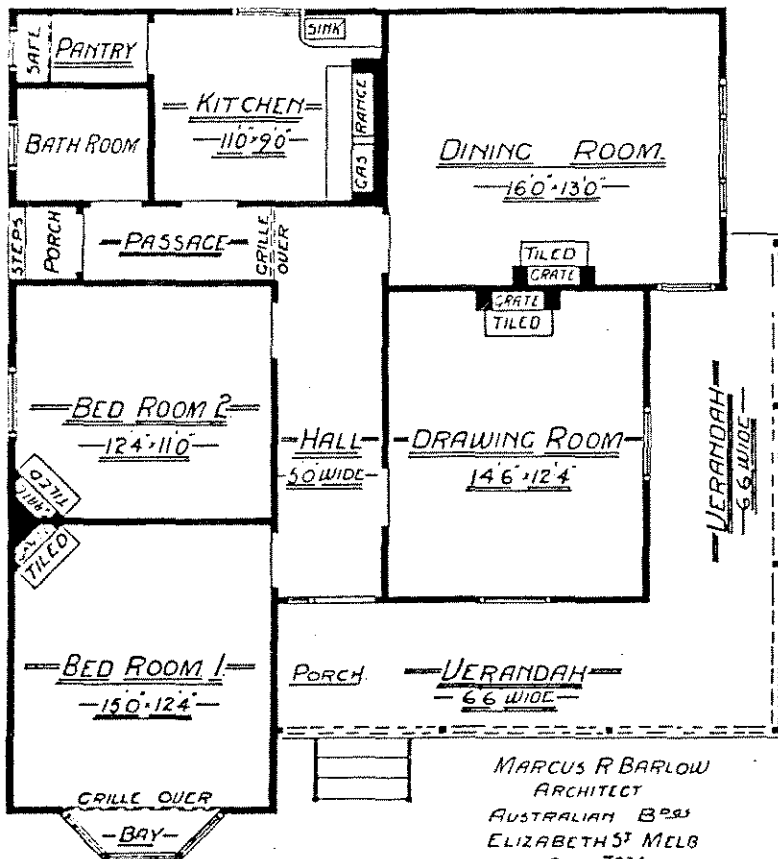
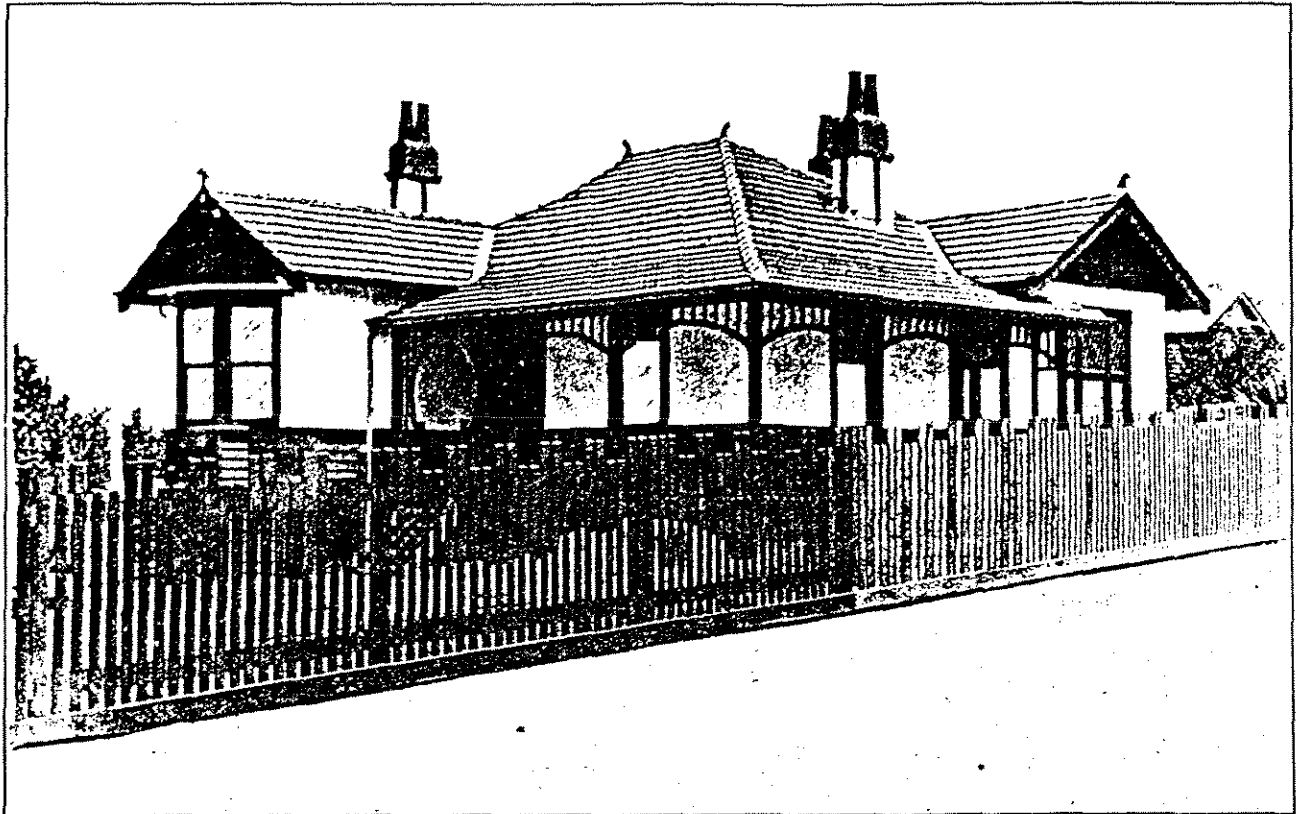
GROUND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

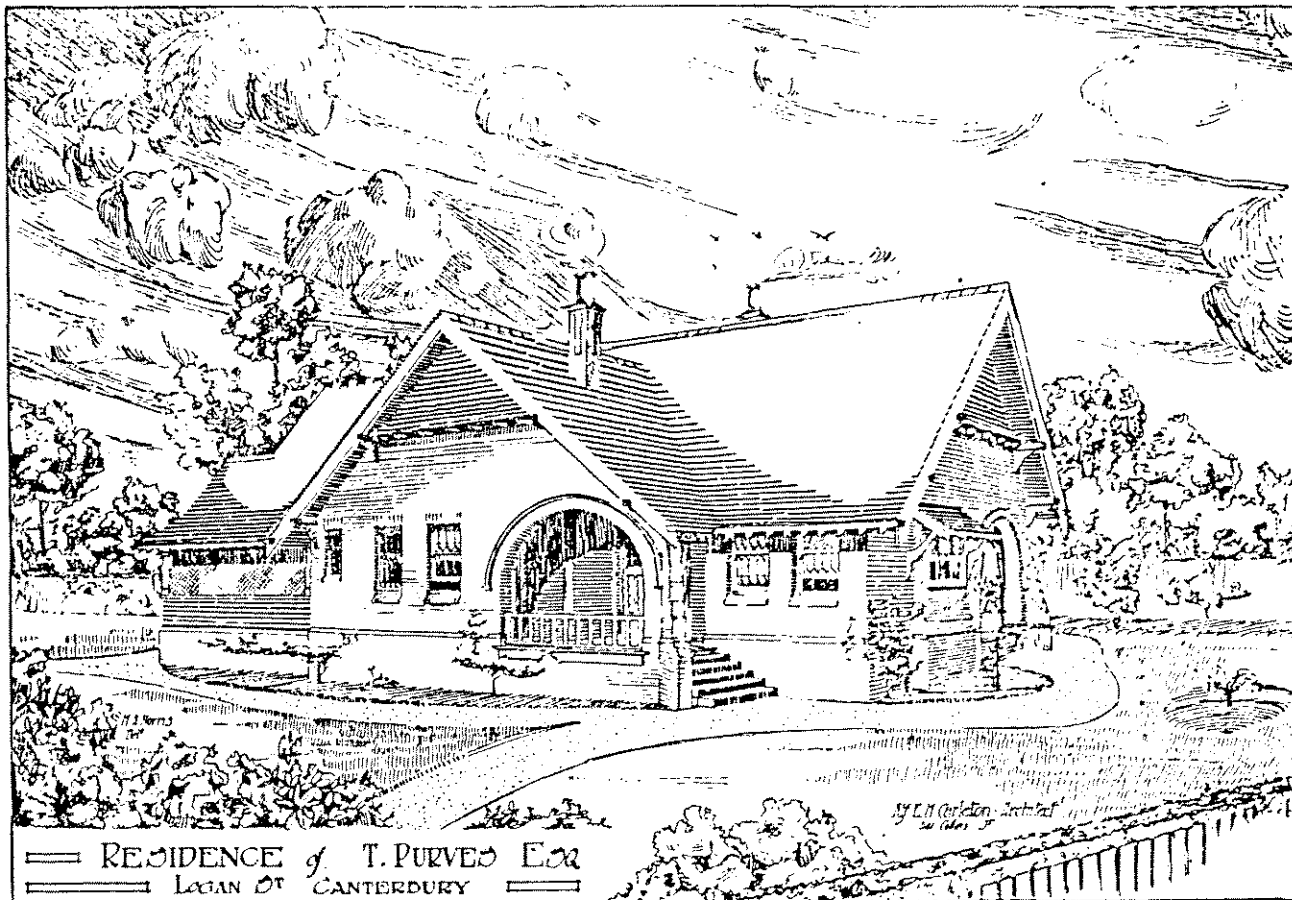


3.2 The Late-Edwardian house; floor plan and exterior 1914

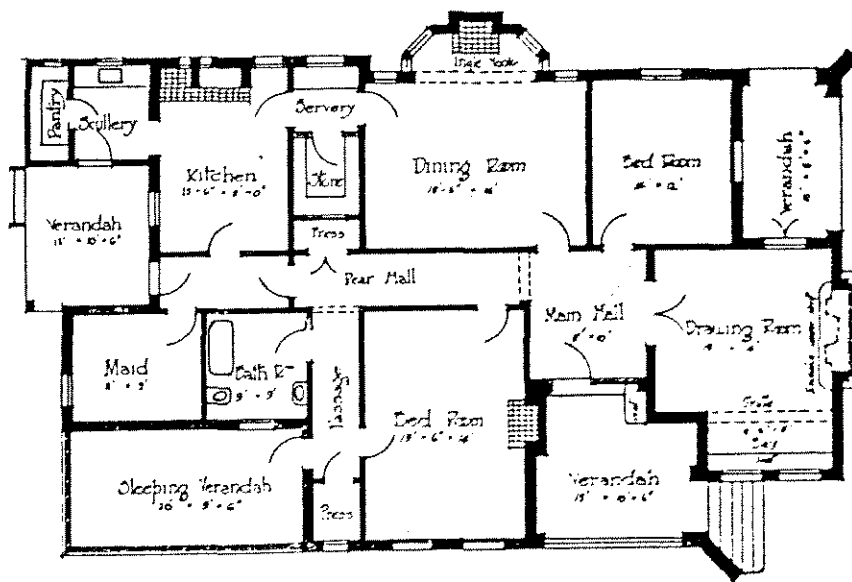


A Successful  
and  
Pleasing Design  
at  
Canterbury  
by  
Marcus R. Barlow.

3.3 Changing floor plans and appearance; Canterbury 1915



Designed by A. H. CARLETON, Architect.

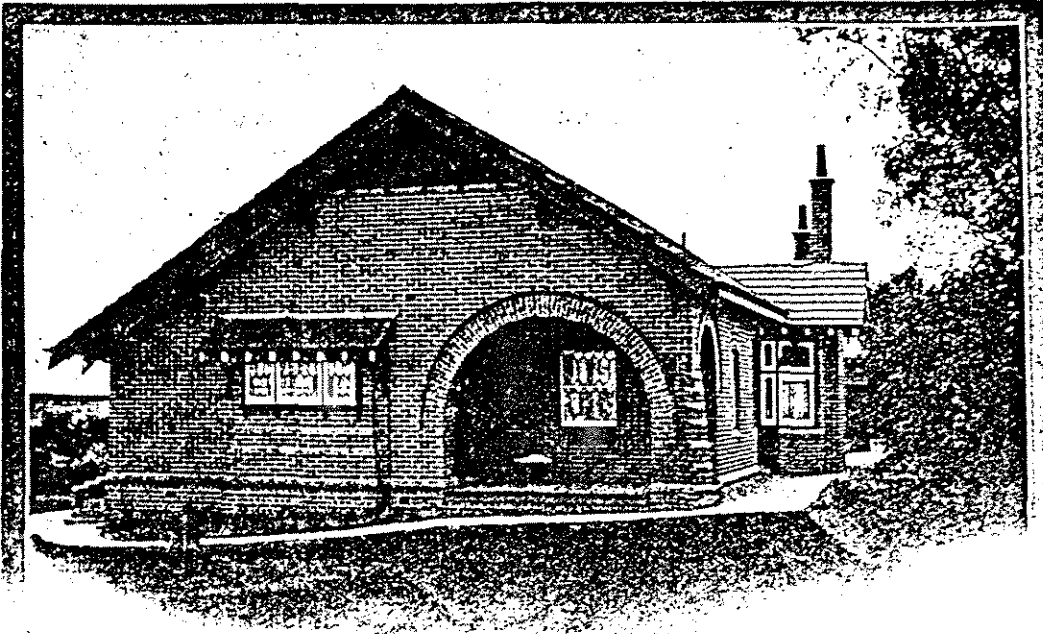


GROUND PLAN

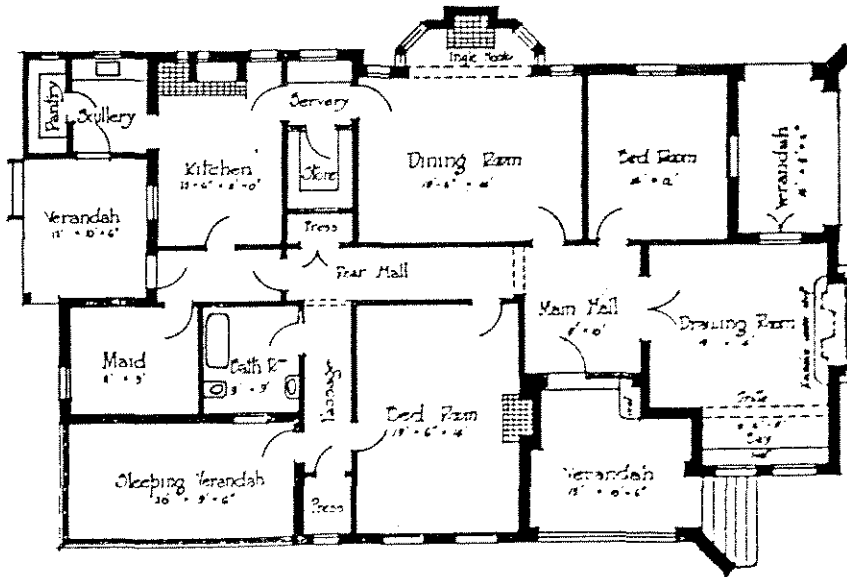
By A.H. Carleton - Architect  
1915

1915

3.4 New styles in Camberwell 1915



A  
side view  
of  
"A  
Modern  
Home."

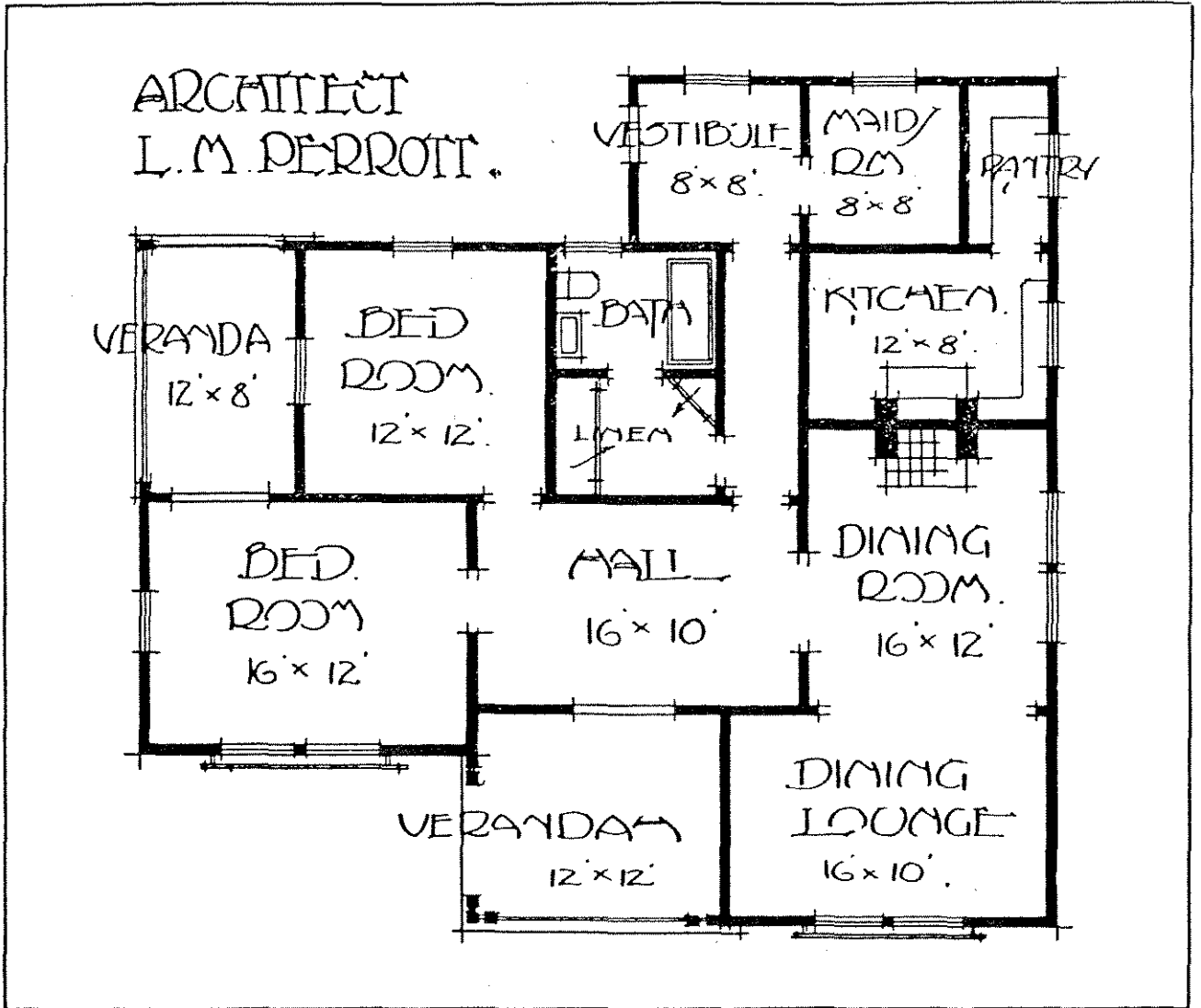


GROUND PLAN

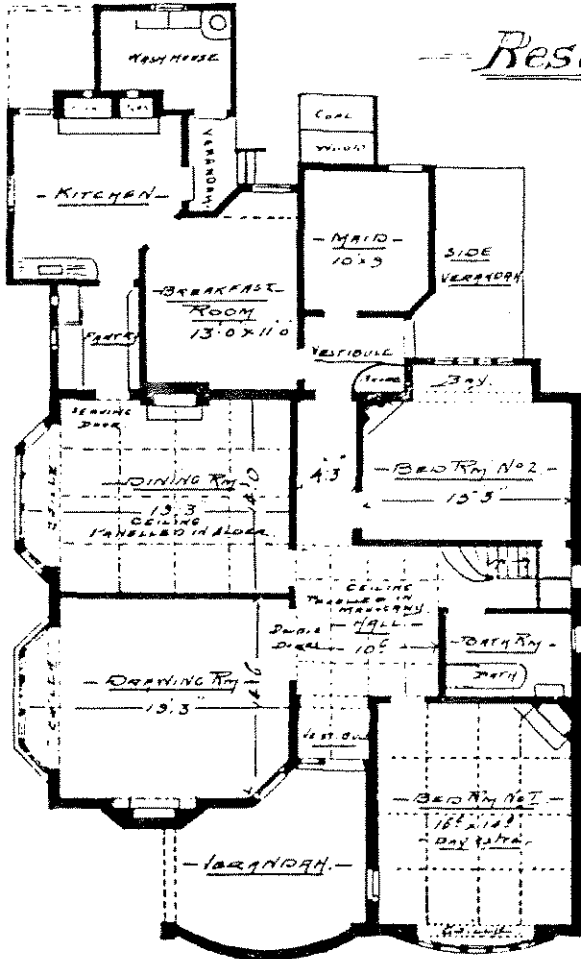
By L.H. Corbett, Architect  
1915



- 3.5 The inter-war style: internal hall, recessed verandah and kitchen-dining wing.  
 Residence; Stanhope Gve; architect, LM Perrott



■ 3.6 Attic design, Gascoigne St, Camberwell



- GROUND PLAN. -

- Residence, Gascoigne St. -

- Camberwell. -

- Francis R. Barlow. -

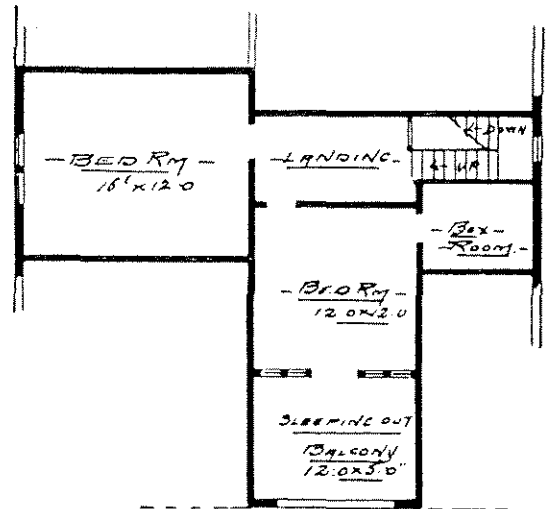
- Architect. -

- Australian Buildings. -

- 49 Elizabeth St. -

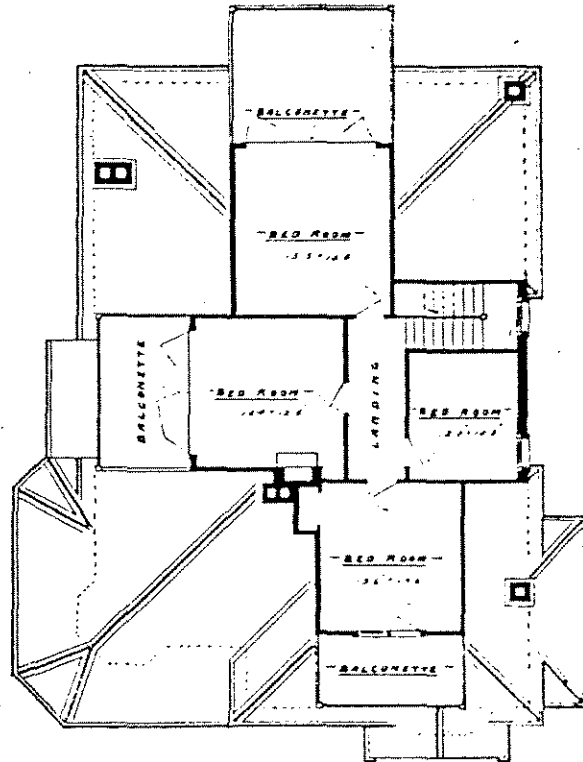
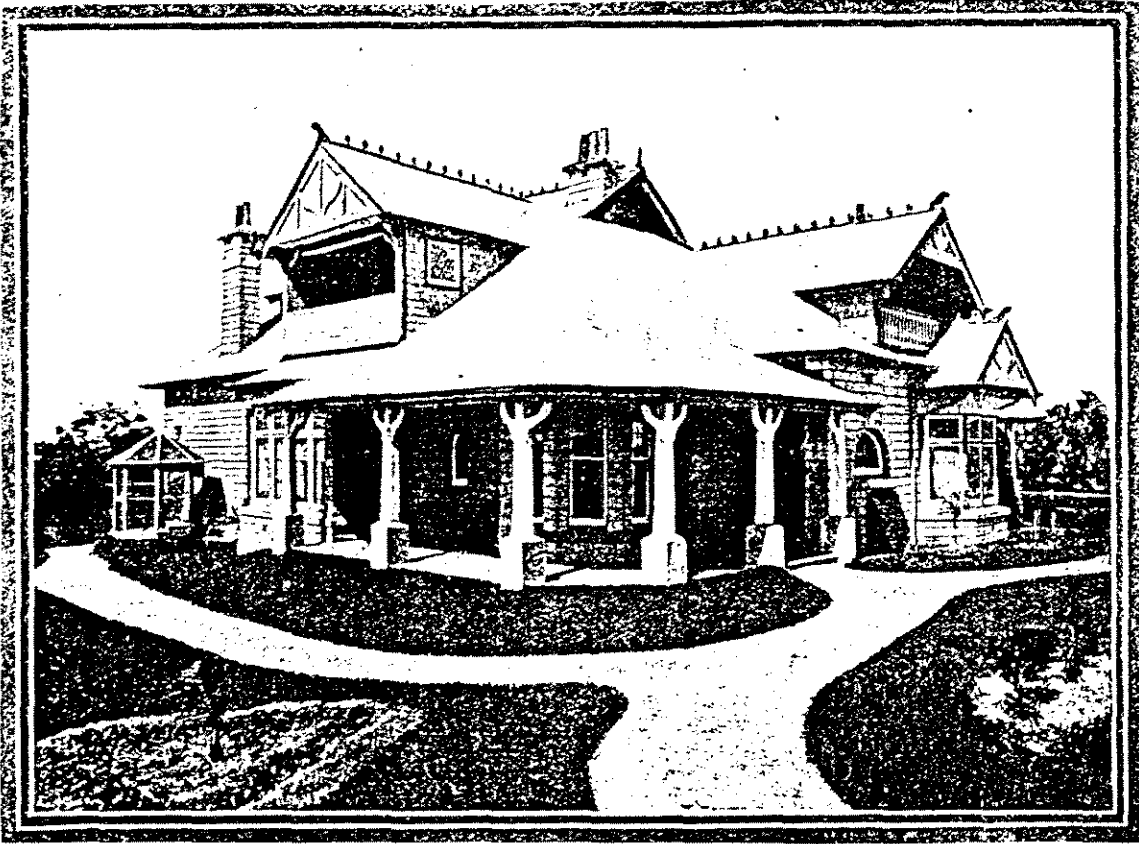
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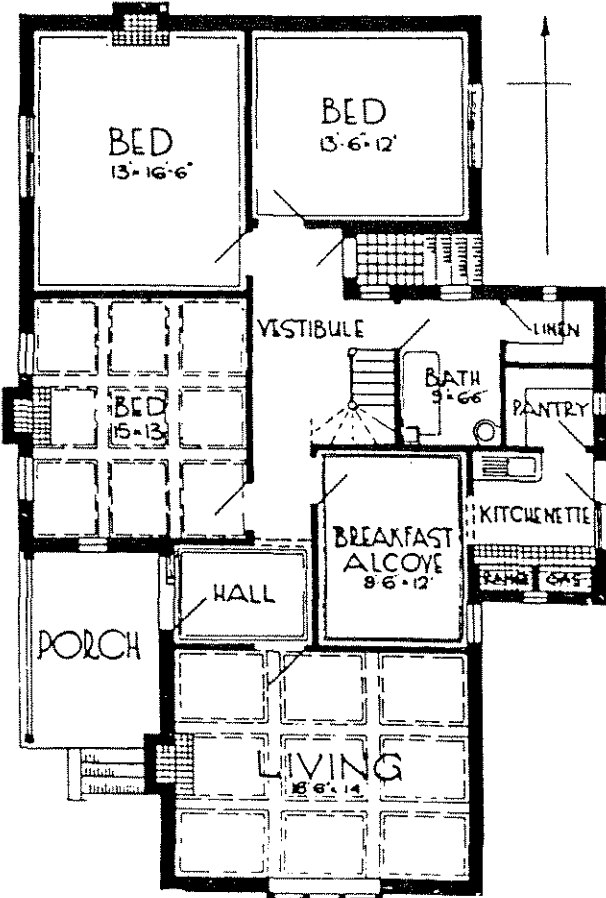
- ATTIC PLAN. -

3.7 Attic plan: Home of SH Wilson, Albion Rd Canterbury



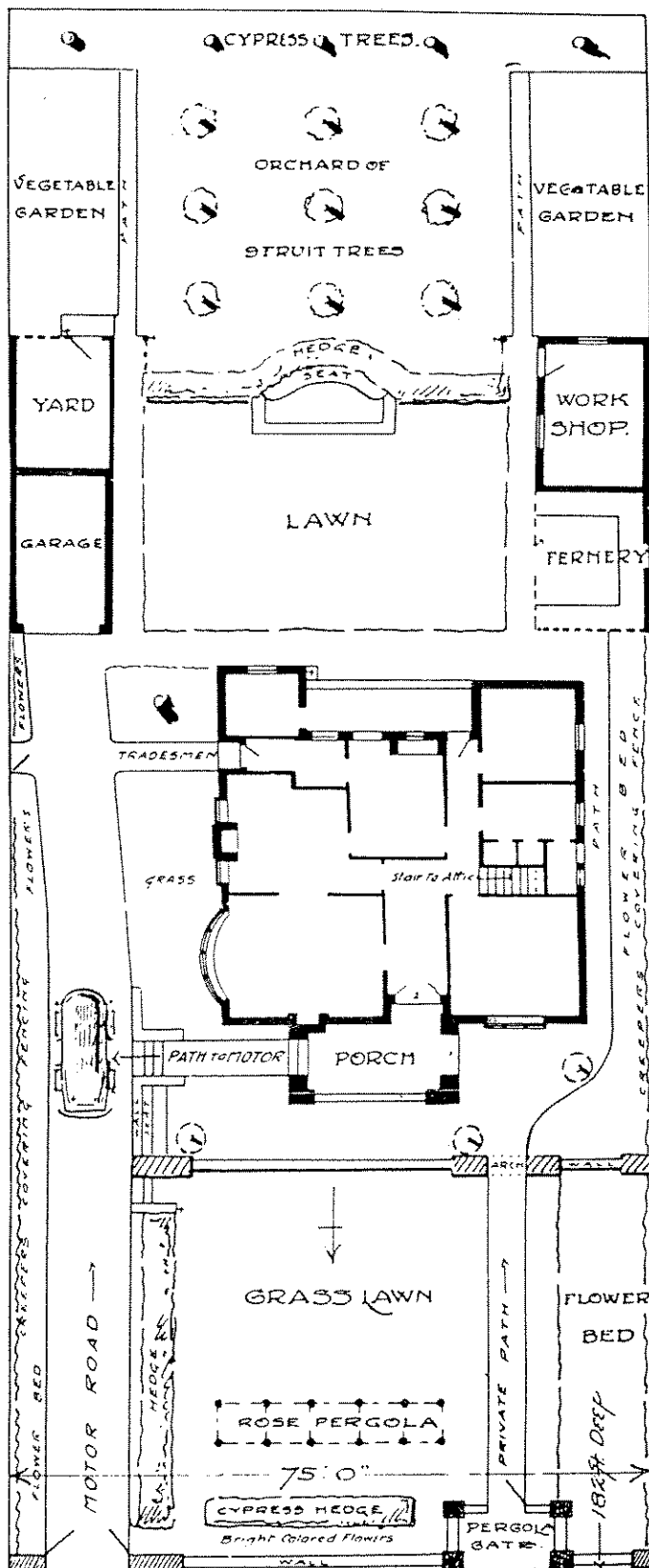
- ATTIC PLAN -

3.8 The inter-war villa with porch, central vestibule and breakfast alcove



Designed by HADDON & HENDERSON, Architects

New garden lay-out 1925



Garden Plan

## Chapter Four

# TRAINS, TRAMS AND THE CAR

On 6 April 1882, the Boroondara Standard welcomed the “so-called opening” of the new Hawthorn to Camberwell railway as an “utter absurdity”.<sup>1</sup> Railway Commissioners had chosen to run only four trains each way daily between Hawthorn and Camberwell.<sup>2</sup> Platforms and works along the line were in the “roughest condition”, complained the *Standard*. Travellers endured steep and slow gradients and level crossings before reaching Hawthorn where at first they had to change trains to get to the city.<sup>3</sup> From these rough beginnings, train links with the city and later tram routes began to influence the spread of building and subdivision in Camberwell. From 1905 onwards, motor bus routes linked parts of the suburb and by the end of the 1920s, several Camberwell residents had begun to travel by car. These various forms of transport left their own patterns on the local landscape. As well they influenced the direction and character of domestic and commercial building in Camberwell.

### The First Railway

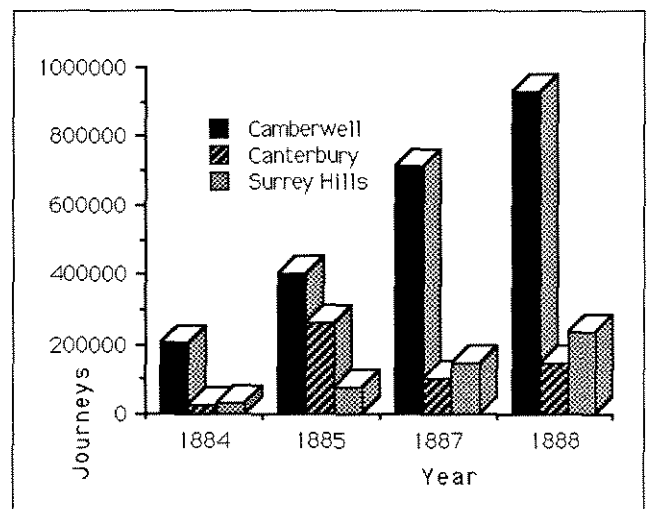
For all its shortcomings, the railway did bring greater mobility to Camberwellians. Before the 1880s they had to take a horse car or horse bus to Hawthorn station to catch a city-bound train. Initial complaints from Camberwell about the condition of the railway were gradually followed by minor improvements along the line. By the end of 1882 trains stopped at Canterbury Road Station on their way through to Lilydale (sic). More trains were put onto the line so that services were built up to a twenty-minute peak and a forty-minute daytime service.<sup>4</sup> Trains still had to climb at walking pace between Hawthorn and Camberwell and cross roads like Burke Rd at street level. And passengers suffered rough platforms and miserable shelter sheds while they waited for the train to steam into its Camberwell stops.

Like later generations of commuters, Camberwell travellers endured rather than enjoyed the metropolitan services of Victorian Railways. Residents along the line and Camberwell councillors met in 1897 to vent frustrations about the railway. The Shire President reminded his audience that the infrequency of trains to Camberwell was an “old sore”. Councillor Maling exposed the incompetence with which Railway

Commissioners tackled problems on the line. Maling had spent many nights scouring over the timetable and discovered that:

*there were eight trains which had to waste time at Camberwell . . . of these two stopped 33 minutes, three stopped thirteen minutes, two stopped ten minutes and one stopped five minutes.*<sup>5</sup>

They may well have grumbled but Camberwell residents took to the train in increasing numbers. From Camberwell station, passenger journeys more than doubled between 1884 and 1885 and continued to increase rapidly for the rest of the decade. Although total numbers were lower, rates of increase at Surrey Hills and Canterbury were even more dramatic.<sup>6</sup>



**Fig 4.1: Camberwell; train travel: 1884-8**  
*Source: Annual reports of Victorian Railway Commissioners, VPP, 1884-1889*

### The Outer Circle

By the end of the 1880s passengers had grown accustomed to dirty carriages, slow trains and endless waits on muddy platforms. As patronage soared on the east-west line, residents and the local council looked forward to the new north-south line through Camberwell, Melbourne’s peculiar Outer Circle.

The Outer Circle Railway seemed like a fine idea in the 1870s. Then the Victorian Railway Commissioners had still not taken over the Hobson’s Bay

Railway Company and so had no access to the east from Melbourne.

Even when the original reason for the line disappeared, with the state taking over Flinders St and the eastern suburban lines, parliament still voted for an Outer Circle Railway. Camberwell residents, hoping for access to the suburb's remotest hinterlands, supported the idea.

Parliament voted for the Outer Circle in 1884 and work commenced in July 1885. The line opened in two sections, the southern line from Oakleigh to Camberwell and the second north through Kew, across the Yarra and on to Clifton Hill, Flemington and North Melbourne (joining the "Inner Circle" loop through North Melbourne).<sup>7</sup> Workers completed the Outer Circle in 1891.

As more prudent parliamentarians might have realised, the line proved an enormous failure. "A railway bungle" huffed the *Hawthorn and Boroondara Standard*.<sup>8</sup> The paper charged that the long tortuous route made for an even slower city-bound journey than the more direct but steep route to Hawthorn.

*The last section of the outer-circle railway has been completed and the whole line is now open to such of the general public as have the courage to travel over it, The shortest time in which the journey from Melbourne to Oakleigh can be made being three and a half hours against thirty minutes by the old line The outer-circle passes through some very beautiful scenery but very little more could be said for it, as it is carried all around a score of suburbs but never going near enough to be of use to any one of them. As it stands at present the outer circle is a monument of folly.*<sup>9</sup>

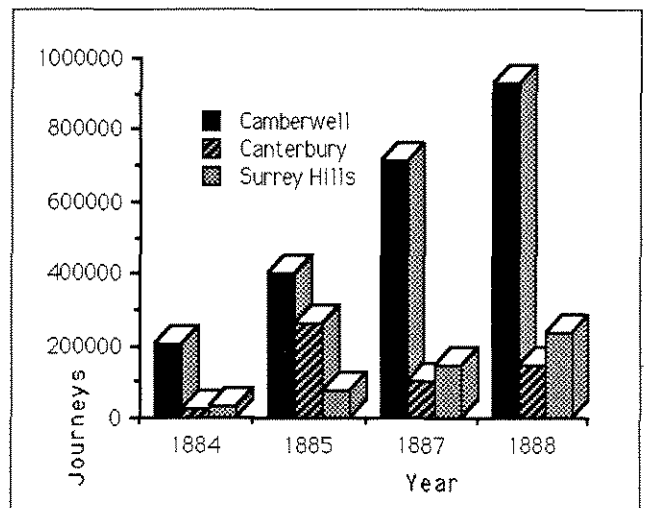
This monument did not survive long in its complete form. Before the end of the century, outer sections were closed. Graham McInnes described childhood trips along the Outer Circle Line of 1920, when he and his schoolfriends set out:

*like young archaeologists bent on finding traces of a lost civilisation in the tumult of abandoned embankments, the caverns of brush-choked cuttings, or the grass-grown ruins of deserted wayside stations.*

*At one point a high wooden trestle bridge, several hundred feet long had been thrown across a tributary of the Yarra. This monolith, derelict in the sun-filled empty silence, was to us an impressive Paestum or Temple of Poseidon.*<sup>10</sup>

With empty carriages and few trains, the line between Camberwell and Ashburton closed for several years and re-opened in 1898. Camberwell councillors tried to convince the Railway Commissioners to again forge a link with East Malvern; these request were rejected, generally on grounds of cost; rejections based on "so much piffle" according to Councillor Reid.<sup>11</sup>

This spur route was electrified in 1924 and later extended to a new station at Alamein, just short of the viaduct and trestle bridge described by McInnes. The northern section, from Camberwell through to Kew were reopened for a time until finally closed in 1927.



**Fig 4.2: Camberwell; train travel from major stations 1914-1925**

*Source: Victorian Railways, Annual Report, 1925, Appendix 31 VPP, 1025 vol 2*

### Darling Line

Near to the Outer Circle's leap across Gardiner's Creek, a third line touched the southern boundary of Camberwell. Gardiner, one of the stations on this line served southern Camberwell, though with less travellers than on the central line, as the table above indicates. In 1882 plans for an additional Inner Circle line attracted some train-addicted politicians. Eventually they pared the scheme down and a shorter

route ran from Burnley to the Waverley Rd station on the Outer Circle Line. Passing through Glen Iris and crossing Burke Rd near Gardiner's Creek it opened up possible subdivision on the southern edge of Camberwell. Electrification of the Glen Waverley line and possible linking routes from the boundary of Camberwell to Ferntree Gully and Doncaster won attention in the 1920s.<sup>12</sup>

Yet the Darling line continued to have few trains and well into the 1920s it had done little to generate the suburban explosion of which its sponsors had dreamed. The suburban estates of Glen Iris, when they eventually found buyers, did so because of the motor car and the Glen Iris tram rather than the railway.

Both the southern section of the Outer Circle and the Glen Iris line managed to attract a handful of subdividers and builders. Estates were advertised near Ashburton station and some nineteenth-century housing rose on the slopes of Glen Iris around the railway station. New estates appeared around the planned Outer Circle stations at Canterbury, Mont Albert and Whitehorse Rds. Still, neither railway had the same impact on Camberwell as the more direct and central east-west route.

Once extended through to Glen Waverley, the Darling line became an important element in the metropolitan rail system. Not so the Alamein line, regularly listed for closure in cost-cutting schemes. As the subject of a minor hit record, Alamein's two-carriage "dog box" train has won a place in pop mythology.<sup>13</sup> More impressed by passenger numbers than modern folk tale, public transport's "rationalisers" still hold pencils sharpened and poised, ready to excise the last arc of the Outer Circle.

### Trams

Railways were deemed essential to Camberwell's prosperity. Horse omnibuses did run as far as the Riversdale Hotel on Auburn Rd and the service was expected to reach Camberwell. But the suburb lay too far from the city to be served effectively by horse omnibus or the new cable trams of the 1880s. In 1888 the Burwood Omnibus Company announced that two horse omnibuses would run from Burwood into Camberwell.<sup>14</sup> No doubt this may, as the company

insisted, have become "a great boon to the travelling public", yet passengers complained about the short trip from Burwood to Hartwell; elsewhere they had to wait until the twentieth century for alternatives to the train.

### Electric travel

In 1902, Hawthorn and Camberwell councils discussed the exciting opportunities for fast travel provided by electric power. Camberwell and Hawthorn's leaders hoped to lay out new electric tram routes along Riversdale Rd and Camberwell Rd in 1910. Although delayed for some years, the first electric tram route in Camberwell, along Camberwell and Toorak Rds to Burwood, opened in June 1916. Along a branch route, the Hawthorn tram was extended from Riversdale Rd to Wattle Park.

Commuters often preferred trains to the cable tram or horse omnibus; train travellers reached the city after a faster and more comfortable ride in a cleaner compartment. Trams suited those wanting to make shorter trips, often within the one suburb, and in more densely-settled inner areas they picked up passengers quite close to their homes. They could not compete with the train in a municipality like Camberwell, comparatively distant from the city and with low housing densities.<sup>15</sup>

Once powered by electricity they could serve outer areas more efficiently and the speedy trams soon made their mark. Some Burwood farmers saw their horses frightened and their lorries displaced by the new tracks. One party claimed that their cart had been jammed against roadside trees in Burwood Rd as a tram passed.<sup>16</sup> More commonly, the tram answered all the dreams of developing the suburb's rural extremes. Agents for the Tramway Heights Estate in Burwood sold blocks on the strength of the land being only eight minutes walk from the first electric tram line direct to the city.<sup>17</sup> In the north of Camberwell new lines were extended to Cotham Rd/ Burke Rd from Kew Junction and then further to the east to the corner of Doncaster and Burke Rds. The tramway extended along Whitehorse Rd to Union Rd in September 1916. In neighbouring Box Hill, deputations met to discuss electric trams pointing constantly to Camberwell. Under the influence of this new form of traction the empty



corners of Camberwell boomed and one Box Hill councillor told how:

*he had been enthused with the importance of such a project [a tramway] when he saw the development that had taken place down Camberwell way. It was simply astounding. Kew was also at one time regarded as a dead letter . . . but because of the electric tramway running through the place a tremendous alteration had been effected. More striking however was the increased life and activity of old Camberwell . . . previously it was just a little centre of business about the post office and down at the junction and with the advent of the railway business came up Burke Rd after which a good deal of settlement took place around the railway station. A few months ago when the people of Hawthorn induced a line of motor buses to travel as far as the Junction it had a good effect on Camberwell but during the last six weeks with the advent of electric trams it was simply marvellous to see the new life there.<sup>18</sup>*

New life no doubt could be spied from Box Hill. But at least in the north of Camberwell, the trams only gradually brought home-buyers. Camberwell's building inspector lamented in 1936 that:

*it is regrettable that an area of such remarkable natural beauty as North Balwyn should so slowly develop, unexcelled as it is by anything in the Metropolis and much of which is within seven miles of the city.<sup>19</sup>*

The residents of North Balwyn demanded better transport on occasions, but more often than not they lobbied for a railway extension to Doncaster from Clifton Hill rather than for a new tram route.<sup>20</sup> State government schemes for such a line had depended more on expected traffic from orchardists rather than suburban commuters.<sup>21</sup> Balwyn residents did propose a "cross-country" tramway in 1923, to link Essendon, Heidelberg and Camberwell through Balwyn.<sup>22</sup> No doubt the empty carriages and overgrown track along the Outer Circle railway dampened enthusiasm for such a project.

### **Electric trains and motor buses**

No sooner had parts of Camberwell begun to feel

the effect of the electric tramway, than the same source of power was used on the railways. Electrified lines, completed in the 1920s with new stations, permitted faster stopping and starting times. By the middle of the 1920s, the new electrified trains were carrying crowds of passengers from all Camberwell stations; although Camberwell itself remained by far the most important station.<sup>23</sup>

Ironically, rather than spreading housing through the municipality the improvements to train times along the central line and a new station at Chatham, tended to concentrate housing within Camberwell's central corridor. From 1924, electric trains ran on the Outer Circle line and this increased housing densities in Ashburton and Burwood.<sup>24</sup> Yet on the southern and northern fringes of Camberwell, motor transport played a greater role than fixed rail.

Even before the Victorian Railways electrified lines through Camberwell residents had begun to explore possible motor bus connections with the city. In 1905, councillors headed a deputation to the Premier asking for a bus route in May and then in June they made a more specific proposal for buses along Whitehorse, Cotham and Union Rds to Kew Station, and from Camberwell Rd and Hartwell to Camberwell station.<sup>25</sup> In 1911, the Melbourne Motor Transit and Touring Company approached the council about running buses from Union Rd along Whitehorse Rd and then on to Glenferrie Railway Station.<sup>26</sup> During the First World War interest in the motor bus declined but revived during the 1920s. Council heard frequent proposals from small bus companies for routes through Camberwell. Council-approved bus stops dotted Mont Albert, Rochester, Maling and Middlesex Rds and then appeared in 1924 at Ashburton Station in High St.<sup>27</sup> The 1924 Motor Omnibus Act inspired a stream of new routes. Although few of these won approval from state transport authorities, the council supported plans for twenty services through Camberwell in 1925 alone. Bus drivers devised routes to link up railway stations and tram routes. Several proposed to run all the way into downtown Melbourne.<sup>28</sup> The "Yellow Sight-Seeing Bus Company" for example mapped out a service from Camberwell Junction to the city, plotting the route so as to avoid crossing tram tracks.<sup>29</sup>

While Camberwell wanted as many bus services as possible, state transport authorities did not. An advisory committee which assessed new routes for the Minister of Public Works had no member from the eastern suburbs and Camberwell residents felt they were unfairly treated when new routes were proposed in their suburb. When a bus route was sought through Glen Iris for example, Camberwell residents felt it was disallowed because of proposed extensions of the tram service to Ashburton. The outspoken Councillor Reid alleged that the

*municipalities [were] robbed of their trams and now the inhabitants of Melbourne and the 'bus companies were being robbed of the bus routes they were entitled to.<sup>30</sup>*

This dense network of public transport survived into the 1950s and many of the local bus routes still operated during the 1960s. Yet although there are many private buses running in Camberwell and along its borders, it is fixed rail transport and not the motor bus which has best survived the challenge from automobiles.

### **Motor suburb**

No sooner had buses appeared on quiet Camberwell streets than the private car commenced its ultimately fundamental reshaping of Camberwell places and Camberwell lives. The 1910 Motor Traffic Act introduced the first regulation of automobiles and from that point onwards Camberwell tried to come to terms with private motor traffic.

At the beginning of the 1920s horse-drawn transport made up 33 per cent of all Melbourne traffic.<sup>31</sup> Before the end of the decade this proportion had fallen to less than 20 per cent.<sup>32</sup> Yet cars appeared to be concentrated most heavily to the south and east of the Yarra, and especially in suburbs like Camberwell. In Glen Iris between 1924 and 1926, where population increased by ten per cent, road traffic rose by 35 per cent.<sup>33</sup> Tangles of cars, trams, horses and buses at Camberwell Junction led to complaints and an attempt to fix speed limits; a task beyond the powers of municipal councils.<sup>34</sup> By 1929, Camberwell Junction had become recognised in the new argot of motoring as a "bottleneck". In a traffic count in 1929 more than 6000 vehicles passed through the intersection

in one day.<sup>35</sup> Of these, half were private cars.<sup>36</sup> Other Camberwell streets, especially Whitehorse Rd were reported as regularly congested by a melange of horses, carts, buses and cars.

At both the Junction and major intersections (Toorak and Burke Rds for example) council requested policemen to direct traffic. Elsewhere council workers installed silver "traffic buttons" to control turning cars. In 1927 Camberwell councillors again attempted to control cars by imposing a fifteen miles an hour speed limit in all streets.

Reluctantly obeying police and ignoring the silver buttons, motorists seemed to be a law unto themselves. In 1920 Malvern Council requested that Camberwell follow their lead and prohibit motor cyclists who travelled with open exhausts.<sup>37</sup> On 12 February 1923 councillors attended a metropolitan conference on the problems of heavy motor traffic. Even before 1926 Whitehorse Rd had become a speedway and council asked that motor-cycle police chase offenders.<sup>38</sup> By 1928 traffic noise posed a real threat to the suburban calm of Camberwell and the Noise Abatement League wrote to the Town Clerk demanding that action be taken against "drivers who create needless din and uproar".<sup>39</sup> Speed and noise fascinated Camberwell's children and council heard complaints about boys who raced along busy footpaths trying to beat trucks to the nearest crossroad (one resident did write in defence of the children claiming that this was nothing more than good healthy exercise).<sup>40</sup> Eventually councillors passed a by-law to prevent children who had made "boxes on wheels" from hurtling down the slopes of Camberwell footpaths. The car brought the excitement of speed to Camberwell residents. It also brought the noise, dirt and danger once confined to the inner city. How much simpler seemed the task of the pre-motor age, when deputations lobbied for railways and councillors met with their metropolitan neighbours in a special conference to regulate bicycle traffic.<sup>41</sup>

### **The motor car and built form**

Despite these initially suspicious responses to the motor car, Camberwell like the rest of the metropolis has succumbed to its charms. Melbourne's first freeway, the South-Eastern, began to bring increased traffic to the southern fringe of Camberwell by the

end of the 1960s. The Eastern Freeway did the same for North Balwyn in the following decade. Had it been adopted in full, the Melbourne Metropolitan Transportation Plan would have even more dramatically reshaped Camberwell.<sup>42</sup>

Freeways like the South-Eastern or the Eastern, are amongst the most massive structures of the automobile age. Since 1945, motor traffic has also reshaped local streets, introduced new land uses (parking areas and driveways) opened the last farmlands for subdivision and brought new patterns of work and recreation to Camberwell. Amongst other traffic improvements, Camberwell boasted the first flashing lights at a metropolitan suburban intersection. Around the Junction, houses and shops have been bulldozed to make way for parking space and a by-pass road.

Between the wars several land agents claimed that their subdivisions were especially designed for motor access (prime examples were in North Balwyn and Glen Iris, in areas furthest from railway stations). Along suburban streets, shop-keepers applied to council for permission to put up petrol pumps on the kerbside (councillors generally agreed to two pumps per shop, but rejected requests for more). Private garages and driveways changed the look of every street and on corners, motor mechanics converted hay and corn stores into service garages. The Royal Automobile Association started to change the character of streets by placing "DANGER" and "DRIVE SLOWLY" signs at crossroads and outside schools. Motorists grew increasingly deaf to such warnings and one Mont Albert resident pleaded that near the busy railway station, despite "SLOW" painted on the road, "motors dash along and around the corner at the same speed". A string of such complaints resulted in local danger spots being marked with elevated "DANGER" signs.<sup>43</sup>

Billboards like those put up to advertise British Imperial Oil startled residents. The Motor Users Association erected signposts at key intersections.<sup>44</sup> But council drew the line when a firm called "Lo-Ka-Tor" wanted to paint road maps on the walls of private buildings in Camberwell.<sup>45</sup> From such initial intrusions, cars have formed a new streetscape around themselves changing the appearance of the suburb even where nineteenth-century buildings survive.

## Summary

Today most Camberwell people travel by car. Nevertheless, fixed rail routes gave shape to the suburb. The east-west line governed the direction of building in 1880s Camberwell. Again in the 1920s, a similar pattern can be followed, with homebuyers waiting for new electric routes or new stations before moving into long-standing subdivisions. At the same time, these later transport changes often depended on the state government being convinced about the direction of building. In 1911, in considering electrification of the Glen Iris line, a Royal Commission had indicated that "the denser the traffic the better the railways are able to stand the extra cost of electrification".<sup>46</sup> In the case of the Glen Iris line, the Commissioners noted that the route ran through "first class building land". More than fifty thousand people could be settled along the line. Instead, because of poor rail services:

*while other suburbs no nearer the city have become closely settled, the population of the districts served by the Glen Iris line has remained almost stationary . . . this is attributed by the residents to the inadequate railway service.*<sup>47</sup>

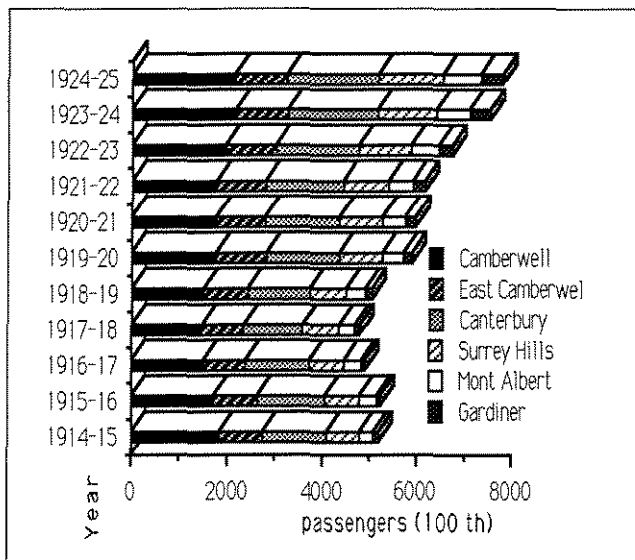
This report produced no real change and again in 1925, when a parliamentary inquiry turned to the Glen Iris line, they found it running through "flower farms, poultry runs and market gardens".<sup>48</sup> The electrified lines and new stations of the 1920s only appeared after some detailed accounting of housing trends and numbers of available building blocks. The direct connection between trains, trams and new houses, which lay behind the suburban growth of the 1880s were no longer made with such sweeping confidence.<sup>49</sup>

In many areas house-builders anticipated transport improvement. In others, new lines did not produce immediate building booms (along the route of the Outer Circle for example). Even in the 1930s, land close to Canterbury station had no houses, while the electric tram along Whitehorse Road ran through only scattered housing.

The origins of the intensive house-building in the 1920s did depend on fixed-rail transport, though not in the direct fashion proposed by local councillors. In 1922 Camberwell began to levy rates on land

and not buildings. "Unimproved Value" and not "Net Annual Value" became the source of revenue; a change which some argued would convince market gardeners, speculators and owners of large properties to sell off vacant land. Paul Dane, a Melbourne rating reformer, was convinced that the marvellous growth of Camberwell in the 1920s was due to this change in rating system and wrote to the Argus to remind readers of:

*the remarkable progress in Camberwell in the building of houses and this progress is attributed to the advent of trams. The great increase in building in Camberwell immediately followed the introduction of rating on land values and it has continued ever since. The building "boom" did not follow the advent of trams as directly as it did that of a change in rating system, which removed all rates from houses, thus directly encouraging their production. The provision of trams may have been a factor in Camberwell's progress and probably it was but it was not the main factor as a study of statistics discloses.<sup>50</sup>*



**Fig 4.3 Camberwell; train travel, 1934**

Source: *Victorian Railways Annual Report, 1934*

Changes in rating probably did hasten the sale of land and led directly to the rapid rate of building in Camberwell by the end of the 1920s, transferring potential building activity from neighbouring suburbs. Within the suburb the spread of this building remained in large part a consequence of transport services. Transport routes gave a pattern to building and

suburban character. The railways gathered housing first of all along the central corridor of the city with a thinner scatter of houses around the Outer Circle stations and at Glen Iris. The journeys by train in the 1930s bear this characteristic out.

The scanty patronage of stations on the Outer Circle reflects the thin spread of housing along the route, just as the moderate number of journeys from Glen Iris and Gardiner reflect the medium housing density there. Not surprisingly, the heavily-patronised stations are those with the densest housing around them, along the central route. Electrified lines often filled in the gaps left on these estates. Elongated strips of 1920s housing followed electrified tram routes. Nonetheless, the nature of the townscape, the form of distinct precincts and the style of individual houses cannot be understood without reference to transport systems. And the railways themselves, in the design of stations, the barriers made by viaducts, cuttings and the colours of rail-side vegetation have left a permanent mark on the appearance of Camberwell.

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- 1 Boroondara *Standard*, 6 April 1882.
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 Allan, "Camberwell", part 4, p 37.
- 5 Camberwell and Hawthorn *Advertiser*, 23 July 1897.
- 6 See fig. 4.1 Drawn from *Reports of Railway commissioners*, 1884-5, 1887-8 VPP, 1885, vol 3, 1887, vol 3 1888, vol 3 1889.
- 7 D Dunstan, "The Outer Circle", Ministry for Planning and Environment, Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, "Outer Circle Linear Park Proposal".
- 8 *Standard*, 27 March 1891.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 27 March 1891.
- 10 Graham McInnes, *The Road to Gundagai*, Sun Books ed. Melbourne nd, p 71.
- 11 *Standard*, 22 January 1929.
- 12 *Special Report from the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission on the development of the area covered by the Darling to Glen Waverley Railway*, 1927.
- 13 "Alamein train", composed by Adams-Faircloth, performed by Pete Best's Beatles and released on Strine Music, SM 001, 1985.
- 14 *Standard*, 5 October 1888.
- 15 On the 1880s competition between the railways and the tramways trusts, see Davison, *Marvellous Melbourne*, pp 155-174.
- 16 *Advertiser*, 15 July 1917.
- 17 *Advertiser*, 13 May 1916.
- 18 *Ibid.*, various dates, July 1917.
- 19 Council minutes, 30 September 1936.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 20 February 1928.
- 21 *Report from the standing committee on railways on the question of railway communication with Doncaster, Kew, Kew Asylum and Yarra Bend Asylum Lands*, VPP, 1901, vol 1.
- 22 Council minutes, 17 December 1923.
- 23 See figures for passengers this chapter.
- 24 Blainey, *Camberwell*, p 94.
- 25 Council minutes, 8 May 1905 and 19 June 1905.
- 26 *Advertiser*, 6 May 1911.
- 27 Allan, "Camberwell in the twentieth century: 1901-1920", p 15.
- 28 Council minutes, 15 January 1925.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 15 January 1925.
- 30 *Argus*, 10 February 1925
- 31 *First Report of the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission*, p 21.
- 32 *Final Report of the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission*, 1929.
- 33 *Special Report on the Darling to Glen Iris Railway*, VPP, 1925.
- 34 Allan, "Camberwell" various references.
- 35 *Final Report of the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission*, p 32.
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 Council minutes, 11 October 1920.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 6 December 1926.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 11 June 1928.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 15 February 1932.
- 41 Report on Metropolitan Bicycle Conference, Council minutes, 27 April 1896.
- 42 JM Thomson, *Great cities and their traffic*, Penguin 1977, pp 133-140.
- 43 *Argus*, 2 June 1947.
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<sup>44</sup> Council minutes, 6 December 1926.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 15 May 1933.

<sup>46</sup> *Report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the railway and tramway systems of Melbourne and suburbs*, VPP, First Session, 1911, vol 2, p 12.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

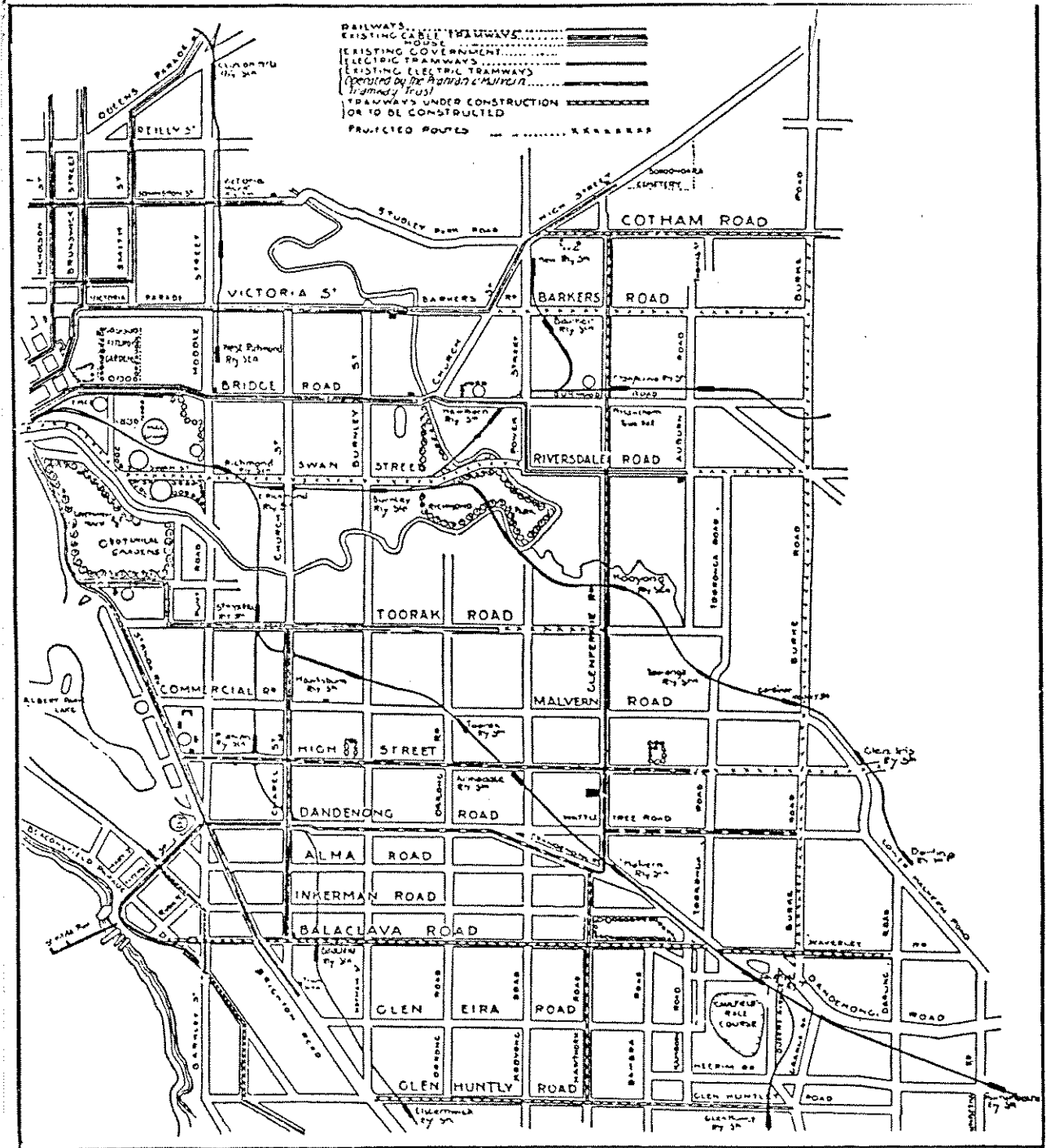
<sup>48</sup> *Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways, Report on Camberwell and Ferntree Gully Railways*, VPP, 1926, vol 1.

<sup>49</sup> *Report on proposed Melbourne-Yarra Glen Railway*.

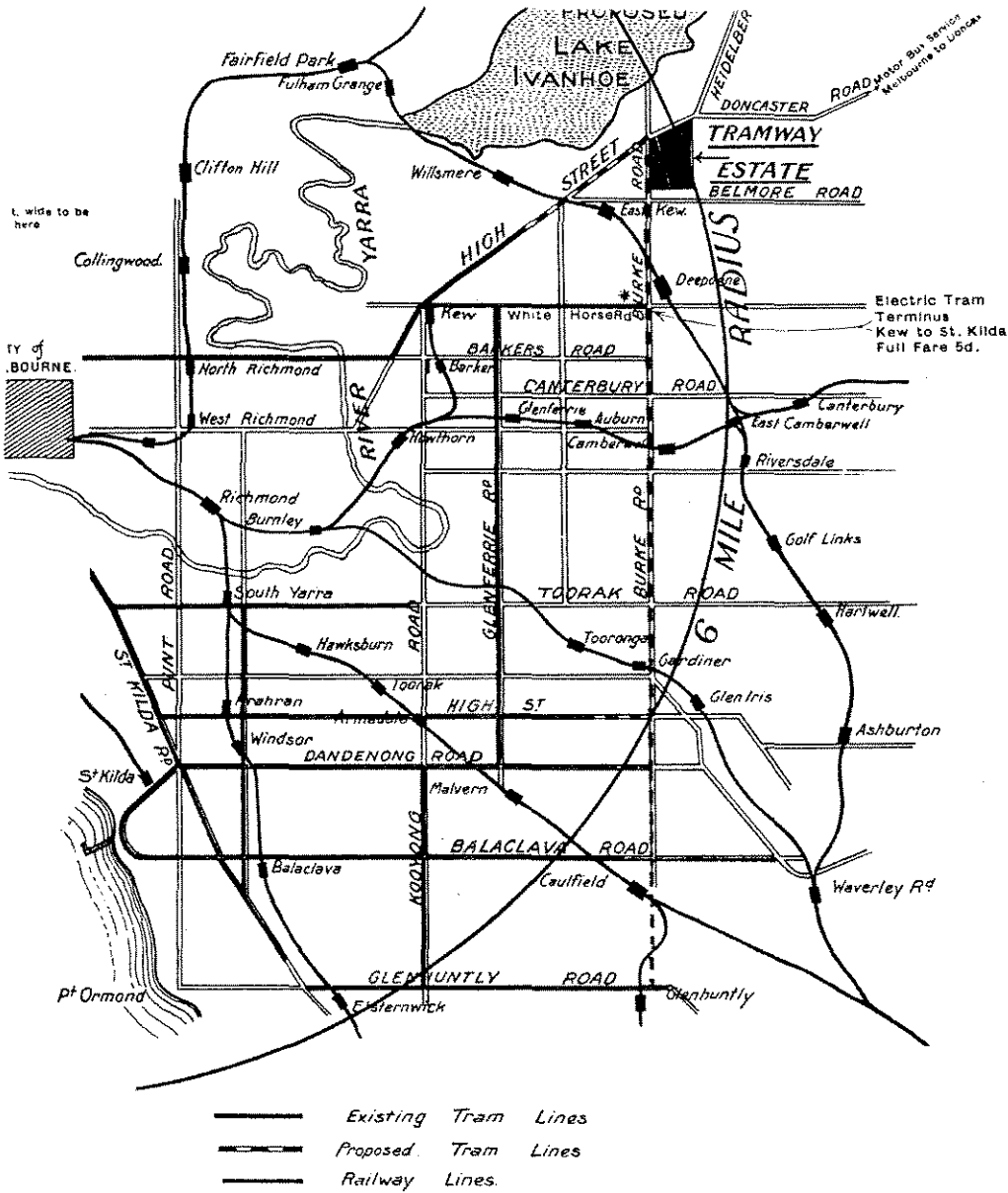
<sup>50</sup> *Argus*, 11 November 1927.

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### 4.1 Tramways in the eastern suburbs 1913

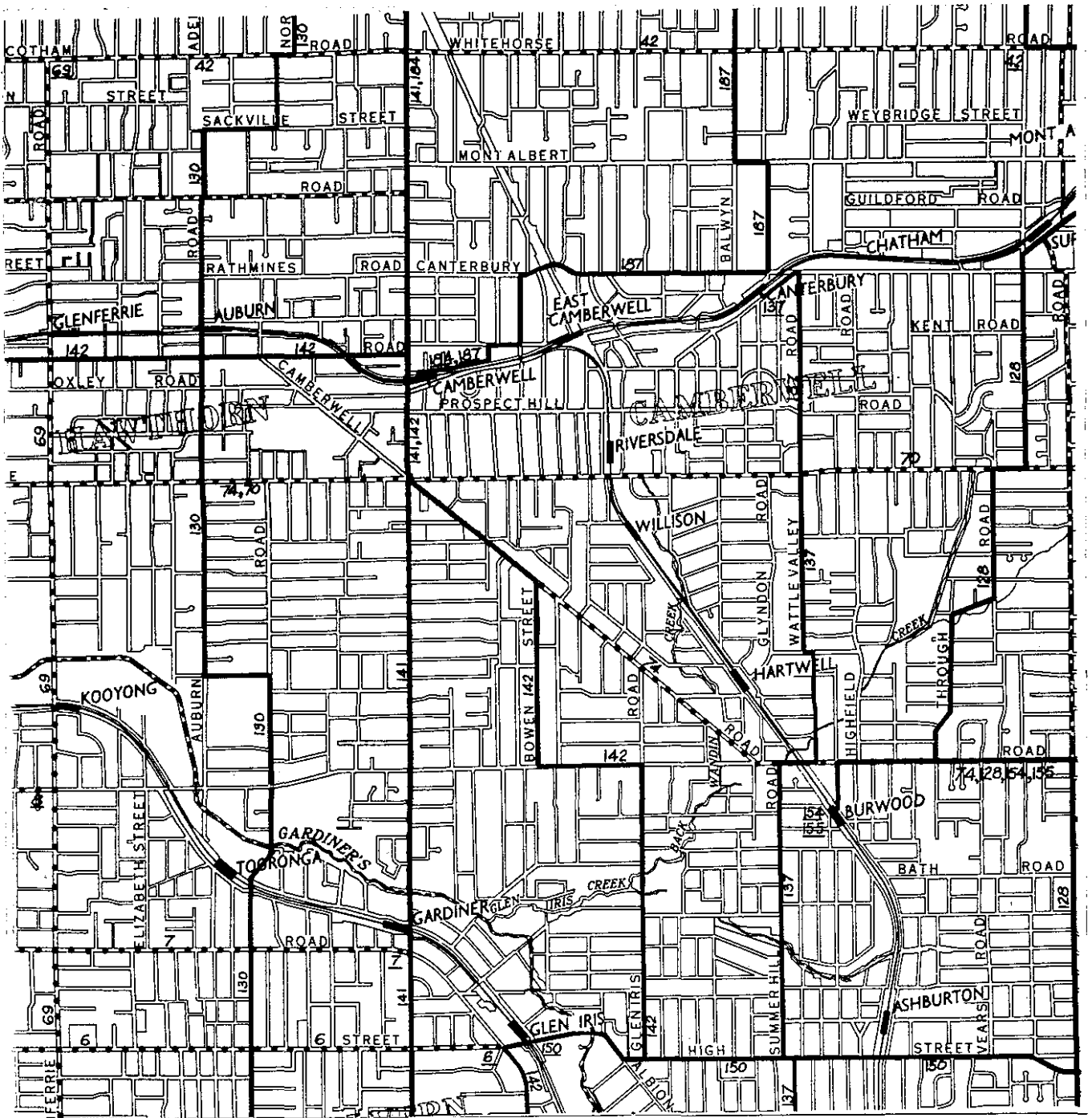


4.2 Public transport 1930s





4.3 Public transport routes in 1960s Camberwell



Source: Institute of Engineers, Australia, Melbourne division, "Symposium on the Melbourne Metropolitan transport study", August 1969, part 2, fig. 9.3

## Chapter Five

# COMMERCIAL CAMBERWELL

Camberwell takes its name from an hotel. While the pub fell victim to anti-liquor crusaders in the 1920s, by then the Camberwell Inn had given rise to the Junction shopping centre. And while suburban Camberwell successfully excluded the dirt of industry and eventually the dangers of the liquor trade, commercial life has always been a part of the suburb. Rows of two-storey shops facing tram lines, clusters at railway stations, theatres, offices and stores at the Junction; these are central to the character of Camberwell.

### The village stores

Before 1880, small settlements, like Balwyn in the north or Glen Iris to the south indicated the junctures of country roads. At many, an hotel, post office and perhaps general store made familiar landmarks. Hamlets clustered around pubs or post offices and schools. In 1871, the Longhill Hotel welcomed travellers along Doncaster Rd, the Balwyn Post Office stood on the corner of Whitehorse and Balwyn Rds and the shops and Thorncombe Hotel at Ballyshanassy marked the eastern limit of the shire.<sup>1</sup> On the western boundary, the Camberwell Inn and the Great Eastern Hotel stood at the intersection of Riversdale, Burke and Camberwell Rds.<sup>2</sup>

The first building in Camberwell was probably George Eastaway's Camberwell Inn. Eastaway's business was soon followed by a general store along Ballyshanassy (Camberwell) Rd, run by Robert Beaumont. Beyond Beaumont's store, anyone passing east along Camberwell Rd would have come across a general store run by George Edmunds until 1882 and then afterwards by his son. Amongst other early stores was that of Isaiah Ainger who had a chaff-cutting works in Whitehorse Rd from 1875. The first store in Surrey Hills opened in 1874 on the south-west corner of Union and Canterbury Rds, run by Charles Simpson. As housing extended eastwards, Ludwig Kugelman set up in Canterbury, on the corner of Canterbury Rd and Wentworth Ave. As Allan recalled, "Kugelman's premises bore the familiar stamp of the usual country store . . . he sold practically everything- from gunpowder in the old-time flasks of red tin, to assorted Australian wines".<sup>3</sup>

Traders at outposts like Glen Iris were sufficiently admired to win their way onto the road board and later shire council. Hotel keepers like George Eastaway were local identities. Serving behind the bar of his Camberwell Inn, Eastaway earned a reputation for "upright conduct, urbanity of demeanour . . . undoubted honesty of character and sincere good fellowship"; just the man "essential in young communities".<sup>4</sup>

The growing suburb of the 1880s drew a new breed of commercial men. Men such as Thomas McAlpine, an ironmonger, whose staff of sixty built mantelpieces, fire grates and fencing. McAlpine expanded his Hawthorn business with a branch in Burke Rd at the very end of the land boom. In like fashion, John Golding conducted his footwear business from 1882 in Hawthorn and in 1886 moved out to Canterbury.<sup>5</sup> Successful local businessmen were often those like Golding who first traded close to the city and then moved out to Camberwell during the land boom. Henry Hutchins, a local butcher, was born in the West Indies and had gone to sea at fourteen. After a shore stint in Gibraltar he arrived in Melbourne and went to the diggings in 1858. From there he chased gold finds to New Zealand, Queensland and the Northern Territory, eventually returning to Melbourne and a butcher's shop in Riversdale Rd. Hutchins served for seven years on the Boroondara Council.<sup>6</sup>

### The Junction

From the 1880s onwards, as crossroad hamlets stagnated, new commercial centres grew apace; none more so than Camberwell Junction. The railway drew trade from the Junction north along Burke Rd. Within this block storekeepers did their best to promote a commercial centre different from the sleepy villages of the rest of Camberwell. Burke Rd, Camberwell, they insisted, could rival Bourke St Melbourne. "No need to go into the city" announced Steve James, "the Camberwell tailor".<sup>7</sup> James promised a first-class suit to order for any Camberwell gent. Nearby, A Riley, carpenter, promoted his business to new residents, offering housing materials and fittings, with venetian blinds a speciality. Best known of the retailers was perhaps Stoddart's, the chemist, advertising "prescriptions and recipes . . . accurately compounded

and a large assortment of perfumery, toilet articles and patent medicines".<sup>8</sup>

Boom-decade shops had a distinctive character, exemplified by the new building opened on 30 May 1890 at the Junction. McAlpine's Ironmongery could be seen from a distance over the new subdivisions around Burke Rd. New stores like McAlpine's had wide verandahs extending across often unmade footpaths and heavily ornamented facades. But in the Junction and elsewhere these new emporia often abutted against rows of cheap jerry-built shops. Small wooden and iron shops took up a part of the Burke Rd frontage and were condemned by council health inspectors in the twentieth century.

Before the railway, prime shop sites had extended along Camberwell Rd, capturing passing trade to the east. By 1900 Burke Rd had become the first commercial strip in Camberwell. Walking north from the six-way intersection a visitor would have passed the Camberwell Inn now run by Ada Withers. After a row of vacant shopfronts the pedestrian came to Broomhead's Estate Agency, a bicycle works and a string of small, typically suburban stores, a dressmaker, a bootmaker, a draper, a hairdresser, a greengrocer and a woodyard. Alongside the offices of the local newspaper, William J Cross (who had come from Port Melbourne to Camberwell) ran a newsagency. Beyond a second string of bootmakers, greengrocers etc were Rocke and Emmerson, estate agents and then came a cluster of trade depots which gave an industrial flavour to the railway station; a plumber and several wood merchants.<sup>9</sup>

Elsewhere stations created new clusters of commerce. At Surrey Hills, in 1900 shops extended from the Surrey Hotel on the corner of Canterbury Rd to the railway line. Facing Canterbury station was a longer strip of shops in Canterbury Rd. In 1900 these included as well a post office, the Canterbury Reading Room and Library and the Canterbury Police Station. Within the familiar clump of greengrocer, newsagency, bootmaker and dressmaker was Quong Pong's Chinese laundry.<sup>10</sup>

### Manufacturers

Suburban estates and the railway quickened commercial life. At the same time, older industries derived from

farming survived in Camberwell. McGee's butchery in Camberwell Rd filled a two-horse van at the meat market in North Melbourne and traversed the district as far as Burwood selling meat. Other Camberwell butcheries were more slaughteryards than retail establishments and four or five butcheries carried on through the 1870s and 1880s. Mindful of the demands of new suburbanites, council health inspectors took a harder line towards these traders by the 1890s, fining several for selling meat (half a sheep for half a crown) from houses which had no separate retail entrance.

These were typical of the small trading and manufacturing enterprises, often deriving products from local farmers and selling to the new housing estates. Besides these small productive works, Camberwell also included by the 1880s, several small boot factories, principal amongst them Golding's in Canterbury Rd and at least one pottery in Balwyn.<sup>11</sup> By the turn of the century Mawson and Co were manufacturing jam in Canterbury Rd. Rook's carriage works operated near the Junction and McGill's made boot-making machinery from their workshop in Whitehorse Rd. Small workshops produced building materials, like fibro panels in the 1920s. By then zoning regulations and by-laws on industrial land-use restricted factories in Camberwell. Most survivors were small-scale and attached to shops; bakeries and motor body works for example, or else they supplied building trades, for example a brickworks and several joineries.<sup>12</sup>

### Shopping hierarchy

In 1900, a clear commercial hierarchy emerged in Camberwell. The Junction remained the major centre of trade with several shopping strips around stations or at major intersections, many of them along the municipal borders.

Smaller clusters of shops could be found at Balwyn in Whitehorse Rd near the intersection with Balwyn Rd and in Canterbury Rd near the Canterbury Club Hotel or in Surrey Hills. Other small clusters occurred in Norwood (Burwood Rd) near to Hartwell Railway Station. Isolated shops stood in the more remote part of Camberwell. For example at the intersection of Burwood and Boundary Rds or at Glen Iris where the Glen Iris Post Office occupied a site above the

creek valley (unlike its present site, this was in Camberwell). Dairies were the most widespread of small businesses in the suburb and in each hamlet, not necessarily in shopping strips, dairymen sold milk to passers-by or delivered to local residents.<sup>13</sup>

### Twentieth-century changes

In 1920 the Junction continued to be the centre of trading, this time with an expanded range of services and more stores. Gaps between the older shops had filled and the area to the north of the station had been consolidated as a shopping strip. In this block were to be found Eric Wills, dentist, a lumber yard, a butcher and a dressmaker, Abram Abraham's Cafe and Tea Rooms, several drapers and a florist as well as the North Camberwell Post Office, in TG Swale's library and fancy goods store. Camberwell Rd remained a more important shopping strip than Riversdale Rd, with shops spreading past the Town Hall. During the depression, council approved a municipal fruit and vegetable market at the Junction.<sup>14</sup> The market still survives amongst other inter-war shops in Riversdale Rd.

Shops had spread further along Canterbury Rd, with a wood yard near the Burke Rd intersection and more shops around the Canterbury railway station. Traders had extended into Maling Rd, to the south of the station, with a State Savings Bank, and the Canterbury Hall as the key buildings. Surviving from the nineteenth century were groupings of shops in Canterbury Rd near the intersection with Union Rd and then along Union Rd.<sup>15</sup>

Over the years isolated individual outlets appeared in major and minor streets. The suburb supported "motor experts" by the 1930s. Wood merchants propped on main roads near all the new subdivisions. A group of shops were being built at the corner of Burke Rd and Toorak Rd, at the end of the 1920s with more confident expansion around the long tram routes to Burwood and along Whitehorse Rd.<sup>16</sup>

In general these expanded commercial centres grew around village stores of the 1860s (as in Balwyn) or the railway stations of the 1880s (as at Surrey Hills). But increasingly the electrified tram routes had an influence on shopping patterns. The sprawl of business along Whitehorse Rd for example, and new

shops at the junction of Norwood and Camberwell Rds were placed to trap commuters. By the middle of the 1920s there was a group of a dozen or so shops at the eastern end of the Norwood Rd tramline.<sup>17</sup> When electric trains replaced steam on the Outer Circle line, a new shopping strip extended along High St from the Ashburton Station. New suburban estates were often planned with a small strip set aside for shops. The Golf Links Estate for example had a shopping strip reserved in Camberwell Rd near Orrong Gve.<sup>18</sup> New housing estates provided customers and electric transport drew them to retail centres.

### Shop areas

New forms of travel and the pace of house-building in the 1920s had begun to spread shops from the older village and railway centres. In response, Camberwell sought to control shop style and location, just as it had done with housing. The building inspector had condemned some of the small wooden shops at Camberwell Junction as early as 1912.<sup>19</sup> Then, following amendments to the Local Government Act in 1921, municipal councils were able to mark out exclusive residential areas. Camberwell adopted such zoning restrictions and from 1923 councillors debated the need for distinct shop zones to serve residential areas. They wanted to ensure that new shops were single-storey with a residence, to discourage both two-storey and lock-up shops.<sup>20</sup> In June 1923 the builders, Twentyman and Askew, wanted to erect seventeen lock-up shops on the corner of Burke and Whitehorse Roads. Three months later council refused the application.<sup>21</sup> Then, in 1924, new building regulations ordained a minimum eighteen-foot frontage for shops and a minimum depth of 120 feet.

In February 1923, Camberwell councillors had attended a conference with representatives of neighbouring councils, to find some agreement on shop sites in Burke Rd. So as to prevent the whole of the western boundary of Camberwell becoming a continuous line of shops, several zones were set aside along Burke Rd.<sup>22</sup> Then in May 1923 councillors tried to decide about shopping needs in the south of the city. They argued about where to set aside shop sites in Glen Iris and Ashburton and about how extensive shopping areas could be in Hartwell and at the corner of Toorak and Burke Rds.<sup>23</sup> Soon afterwards, the council extended shop areas in High St.<sup>24</sup>

The Ashburton Progress Association continued to demand additional shop sites and along Whitehorse Rd in Balwyn, council refused several applications for additional shops as they would have extended into residential areas.<sup>25</sup>

By restricting shop areas, Camberwell created a curious shopping pattern. At major intersections around the fringe of the municipality, shops faced onto Camberwell streets. But most of the shops stood in Hawthorn, Kew, Box Hill or Malvern. Camberwell residents often crossed out of the suburb to shop.

Council did approve new trading styles, allowing shops in the Rivoli Theatre in 1920. Camberwell approved the solid new branches of the State Savings Bank which often became the hearts of inter-war shopping strips.<sup>26</sup> The council allowed an open-air theatre on railway land near Canterbury, despite local objections. Promoters of the Balwyn Cinema were less successful and council constantly rejected applications for the new building.

For most of the period, Camberwell sought to encourage housing while at the same time discouraging the spread of shops. By 1929 there were 739 shops in Camberwell; one for every sixty residents.<sup>27</sup> Council followed a policy of reducing the ratio of shops to houses and in 1936 there was one shop in Camberwell for every 17 dwellings. Several areas set aside for shops had been rezoned as residential and the council had sought to keep shops concentrated by not allowing isolated retailers to trade amongst residences. As the Building Inspector reported:

*Isolated shop sites of limited extent are alike uneconomic and adverse to orderly growth and development . . . the areas wherein they are interspersed tend to become decadent [as] is deplorably evidenced in this and in other cities.<sup>28</sup>*

### Post-war changes

Responding to new concerns about planning for traffic, post-war shopping strips had off-street parking like that in North Balwyn and the Alamein Housing Estate. The functions of shops changed as well. The traditional shopping strip advertised a standard range of services. The most common shops were food retailers, grocers, greengrocers and butchers. Every shopping centre had

at least one bootmaker, several drapers or "fancy goods" sales. Real estate agencies stood at the centre of most and by the inter-war period, banks, especially the State Savings Bank, had established suburban agencies at several points in Camberwell. After 1945 new services, as distinct from food and clothing retailers, appeared in the suburban shopping areas. Geoffrey Blainey listed the changes which went on in Camberwell Junction itself:

*there were now beauty salons, dry cleaners, delicatessens, Chinese and European cafes, shops that specialized in gifts, books and gramophone records - all signs of a wealth and leisure which shopkeepers of old Camberwell never knew.<sup>29</sup>*

He might have added that in amongst the smaller strips, the shops were often replaced by small businesses; printers, upholsterers etc. The shopping strips no longer provided only for the suburban household and Camberwell became a centre servicing businesses in the outer eastern suburbs.

The very success of Camberwell Junction threatened its character. Ultimately promoted by MMBW strategies, the Junction appealed to mass retailers. Supermarkets and giant retail complexes were built behind the smaller shops in Burke Rd and in Station St, houses were bulldozed to make way for parking and shops. For a long time one small cottage sat marooned amongst parked cars, the result of a successful Supreme Court action. More recently it appeared that an even more massive redevelopment would erase whatever suburban intimacy survives at the Camberwell Junction.

Expanding markets for consumer durables, new retail technologies, the car as a shopping trolley and the rise of heavily-capitalised retail companies; these radically altered Camberwell Junction and in doing so forced changes on smaller shopping centres. Possibly the key turning point in modern shopping in Camberwell came in December 1958 when Myers announced that they would build two "drive-in marts" in the eastern suburbs, one at Chadstone and the second at East Burwood.<sup>30</sup> Even though the shopping centre at East Burwood was never built, Chadstone became the prototype for suburban shopping towns.

In looking at commercial building nowadays, few of the shopping strips have retained the appearance of their early days of trading. The essence of commercial activity in the twentieth century has been a constant change in presentation. With that has gone much of at least the street-level appearance of shopfronts. Older stores are often dwarfed by retailing emporia. In Hartwell a miniature office district is rising alongside the railway line, a far cry from the small shopping centre of only thirty years ago. Yet shops at crossroads still mark the sites of many of the original villages of Camberwell, even if the hotels of these remote corners have gone. Shopping strips define the tram routes of the 1920s. Most railway stations generated a nucleus of shops, perhaps a bank and post office; and generally these have survived. And even in the Camberwell Junction, mass retailing appears to have produced its obverse. A jumble of individual hawkers, dealers, bric-a-brac collectors and their customers converge on the open-air market each Sunday.

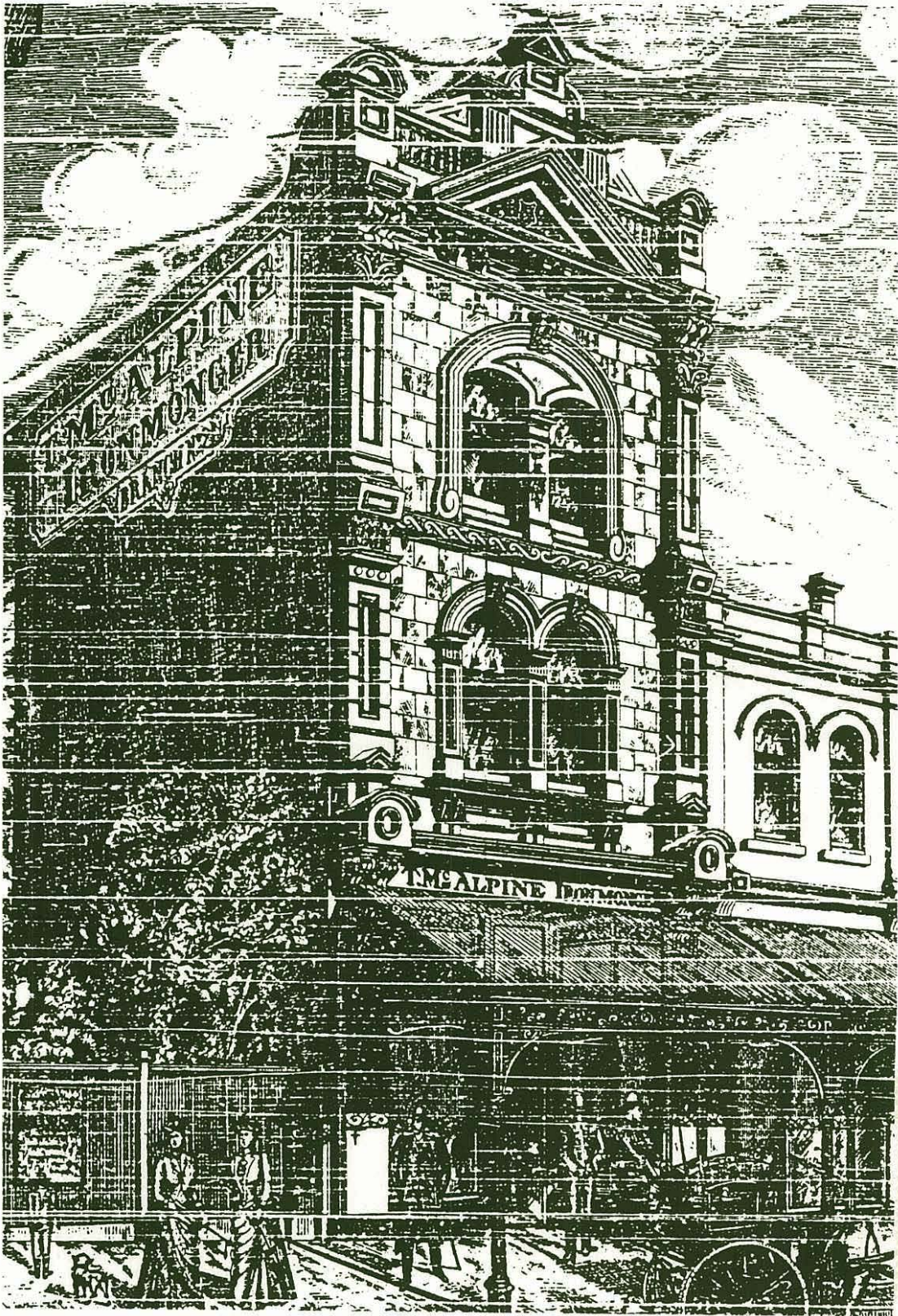
### Summary

Retail changes have left some buildings with an historical interest. In Camberwell Junction, the most valuable buildings stand apart from the site of the original Camberwell Inn and are grouped around the station area. Together with the railway station, its yard and walkways they still represent a hub of suburban life, as it was before the motor car. The Canterbury shops in Maling Rd and Canterbury Rd retain more of the quality of an early twentieth-century shopping nucleus than do others in the suburb (perhaps a reflection of the bad commercial decisions which split the shopping block in two around the railway line and so prevented expansion after 1945).

Elsewhere there are shops which date from a range of periods gathered together in one shopping block. Individual buildings can be associated with key figures in Camberwell's history. But in all retail precincts, changes in the economies of selling, in advertising, in goods sold and the ubiquitous influence of the motor car have radically altered the style and form of the retail areas of the city.

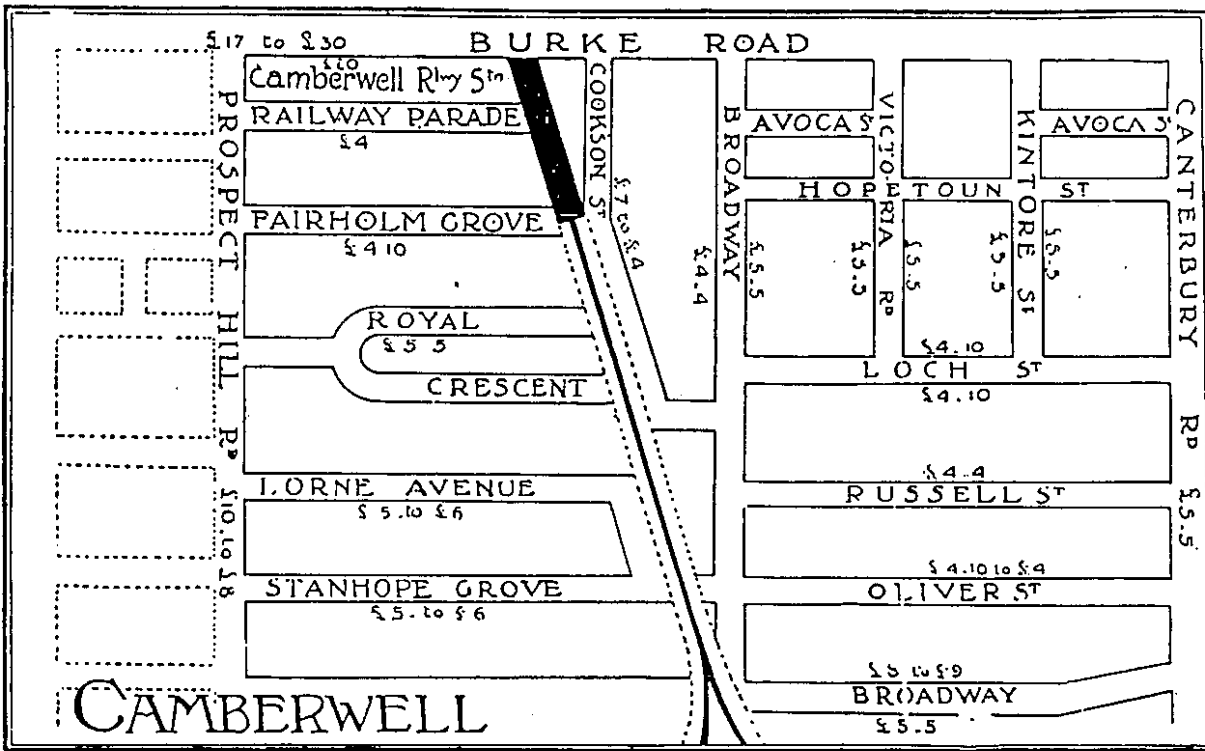
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- 1 Lands department map, Parish of Boroondara, 1871.
  - 2 Ibid.
  - 3 Allan, "Camberwell", part one, p 141.
  - 4 Boroondara *Standard*, 8 June 1867.
  - 5 Allan, "Pioneers in trade", in "Camberwell", p 12.
  - 6 Sutherland, *Victoria and its metropolis*.
  - 7 *Advertiser*, 17 September 1897.
  - 8 *Standard*, 12 October 1888, *Hawthorn Advertiser*, 16 November 1888.
  - 9 Melbourne *Directory*, 1902.
  - 10 *Directories*, 1900-1902.
  - 11 *Ibid*, 1881-1891.
  - 12 *Ibid*, 1900-1932.
  - 13 *Ibid*, 1900-1905.
  - 14 Council minutes, 10 April 1933.
  - 15 See maps this chapter.
  - 16 Ibid.
  - 17 *Directory*, 1920.
  - 18 Council minutes, 4 September 1933.
  - 19 Ibid, 23 September 1912.
  - 20 *Argus*, 28 February 1924.
  - 21 Council minutes, 11 June 1923 and 3 September 1923.
  - 22 Ibid, 12 February 1923.
  - 23 Ibid, 14 May 1923.
  - 24 Ibid, 23 July 1923.
  - 25 Ibid, 3 September 1923.
  - 26 Ibid, 1 March 1920 and 23 July 1923.
  - 27 *Report of the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission*, 1929, p 158.
  - 28 Building inspectors report, Camberwell City Council minutes, 30 September 1936.
  - 29 Blainey, *Camberwell*, p 101.
  - 30 Melbourne *Age*, 12 December 1958.
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■ 5.1 McAlpine's Ironmongery, Burke Road

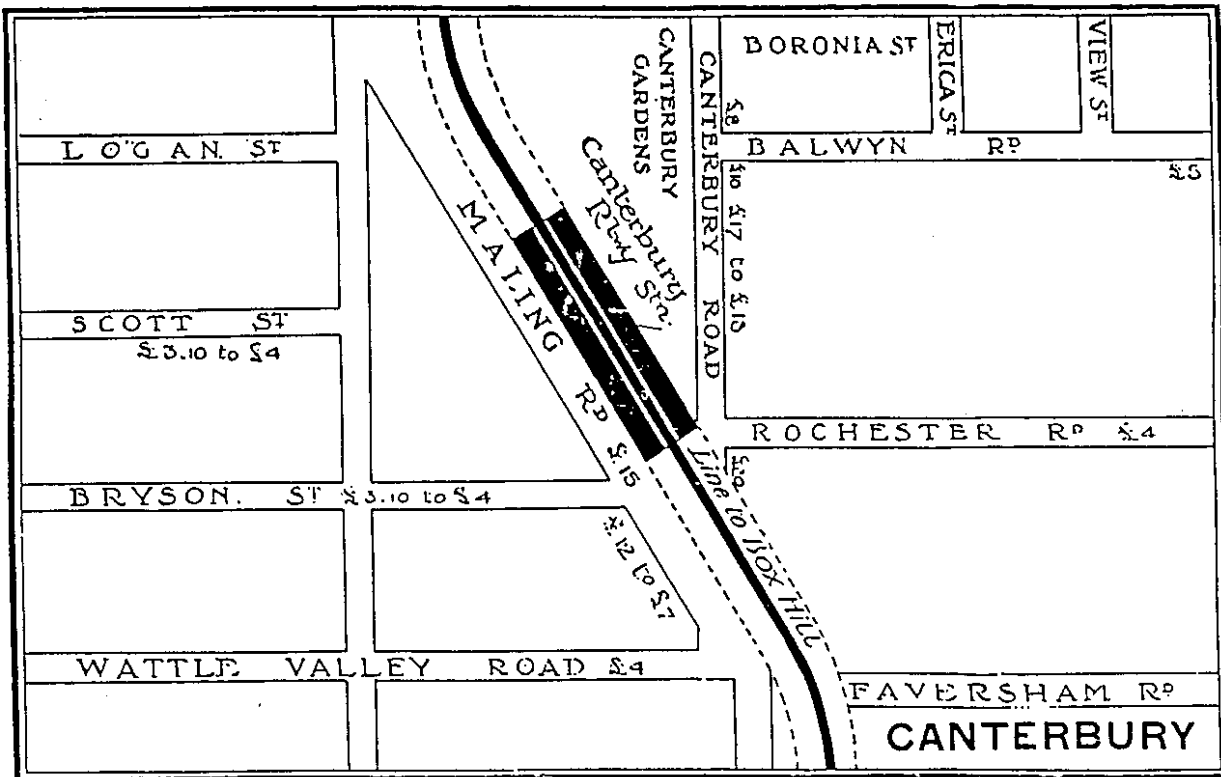




5.2 Commercial and residential values compared 1913



BUSINESS VALUES: Burke road. Residential: other streets.



BUSINESS VALUES: Malling road and Canterbury road. Residential values in adjoining streets.

■ 5.3 Shop premises for sale 1937

At 3 o'clock  
on the Premises

**Auction of Special Interest to Investors,  
Manufacturers, Retailers, etc.**

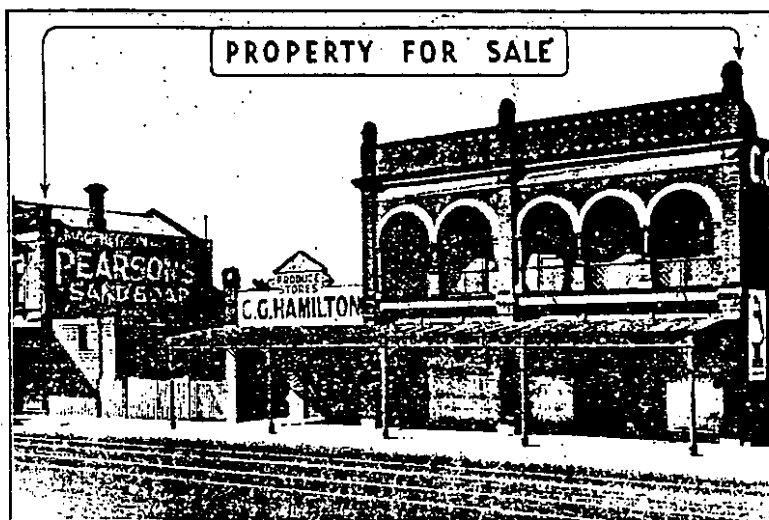
Wednesday, 24th November, 1937

**97-105 CAMBERWELL ROAD**

Opposite Town Hall Gardens, and close to the busy Junction

**CAMBERWELL**

LAND  
about  
100ft. x 240ft.



LAND  
about  
100ft. x 240ft.

**VALUABLE BUSINESS PREMISES**

Comprising Commodious Brick Double Shop, Spacious Storeroom and Six-Roomed Dwelling. These fine premises have been conducted from the year 1861 until recently as a retail grocery and produce business. The location is eminently suitable for the retail trade, being in the centre of a thickly populated and prosperous area, or for the establishment of a factory (with certain reservations), or for the erection of modern flats or maisonettes. The outlook over the gardens would be a distinct advantage for the latter project. The purchaser may obtain

**IMMEDIATE VACANT POSSESSION**

**SOLICITORS:** Messrs. Percy J. Russell & Kennedy, 430 Chancery Lane, Melbourne. Tel.: Cent. 1826

**TERMS:** Ten Per. Cent. Deposit, Balance in One Month.

For further particulars and arrangements re inspection apply to the AUCTIONEER:

**COGHILL and SON**

79 Swanston Street, Melbourne, and at Canterbury. Tels. Cent. 2793, 2794; W 2059.  
or their co-Agents

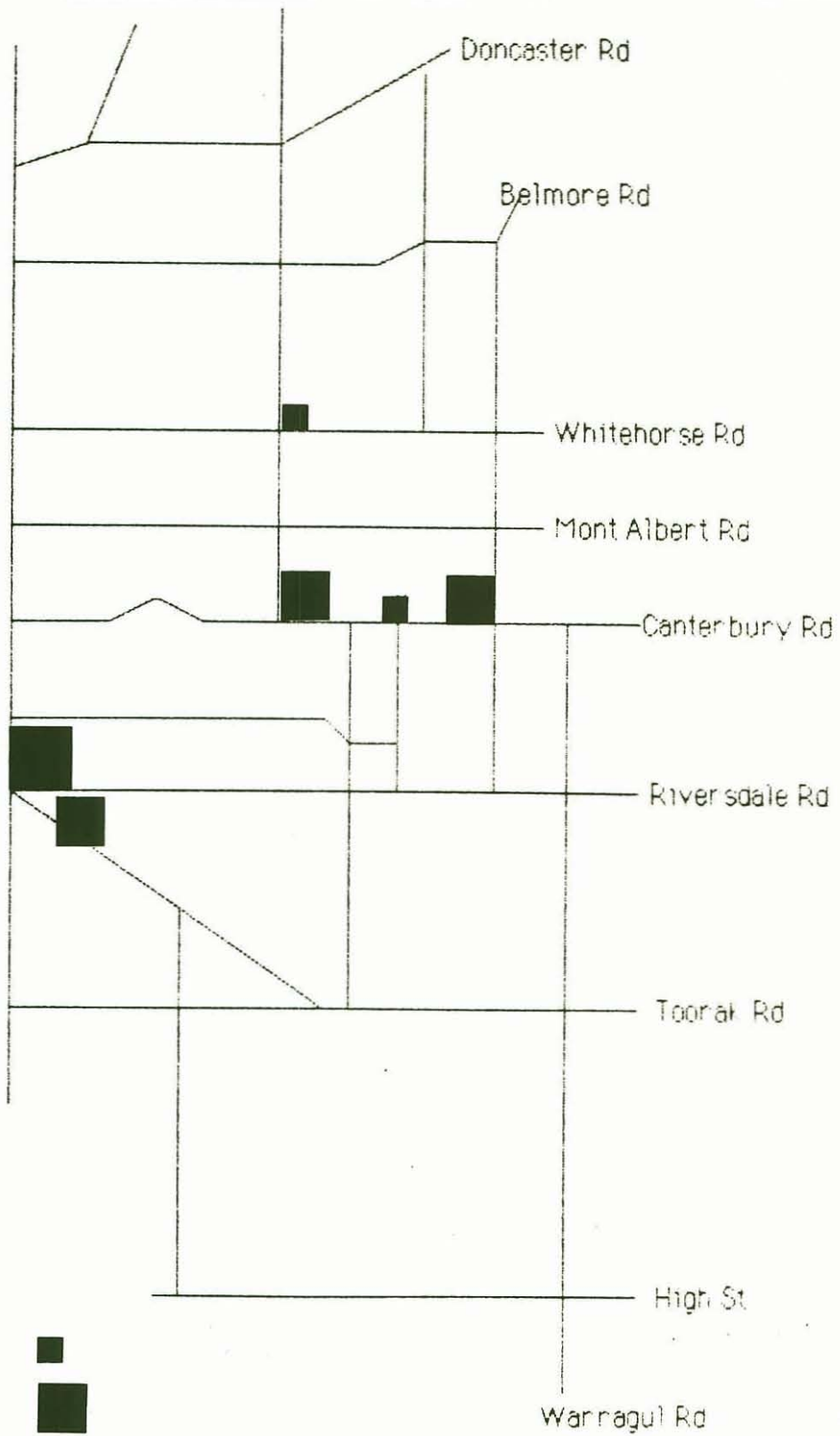
**BROOMHEAD and CO.**

741 Burke Road, Camberwell. Tel.: Haw. 3343

(Both Members The Real Estate and Stock Institute of Victoria)

H. Bowley, Printer, 102 Canterbury Road, Canterbury

■ 5.4 Shopping hierarchy 1902



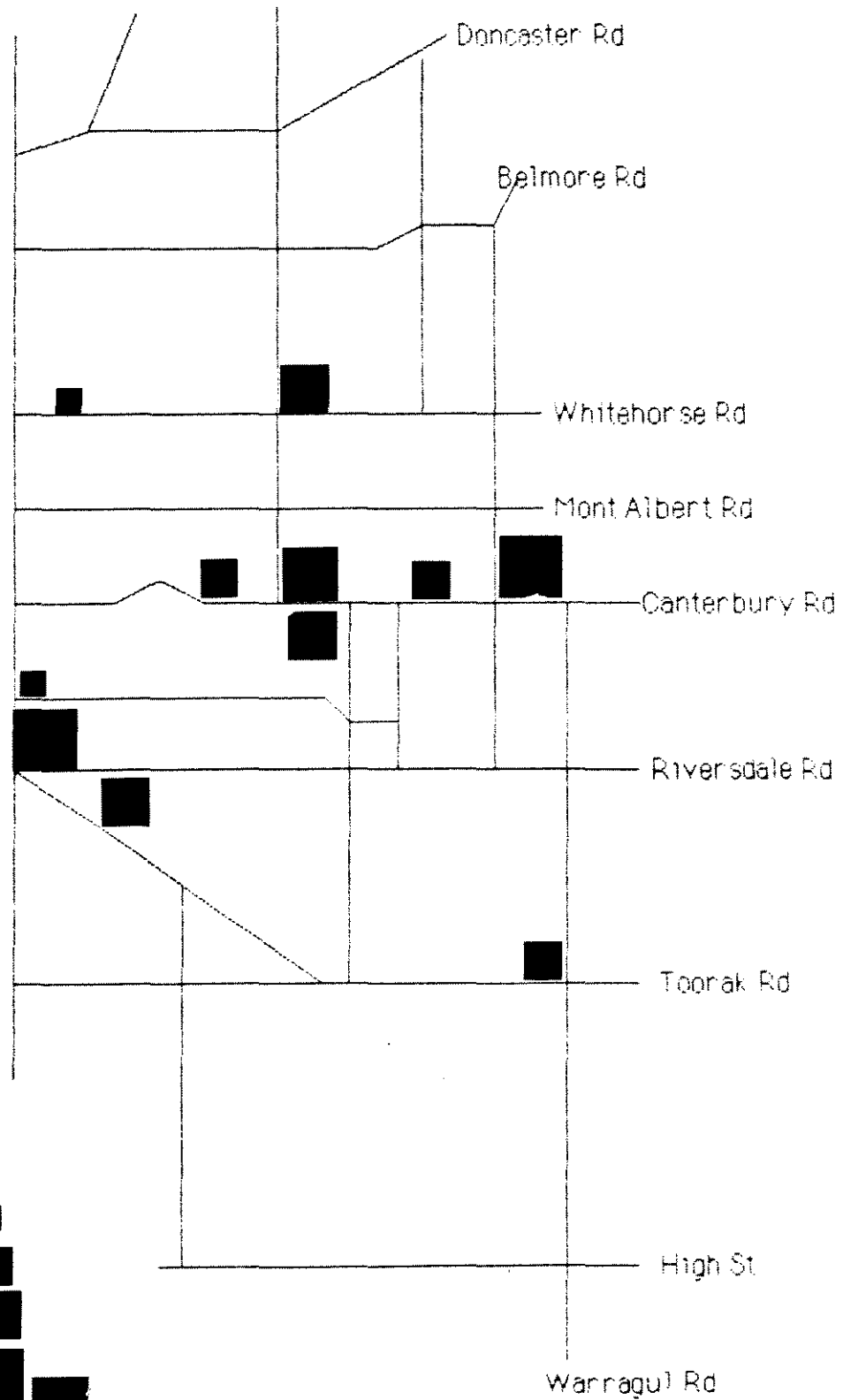
**Legend**

5-10 premises

11-30 premises

More than 30 premises

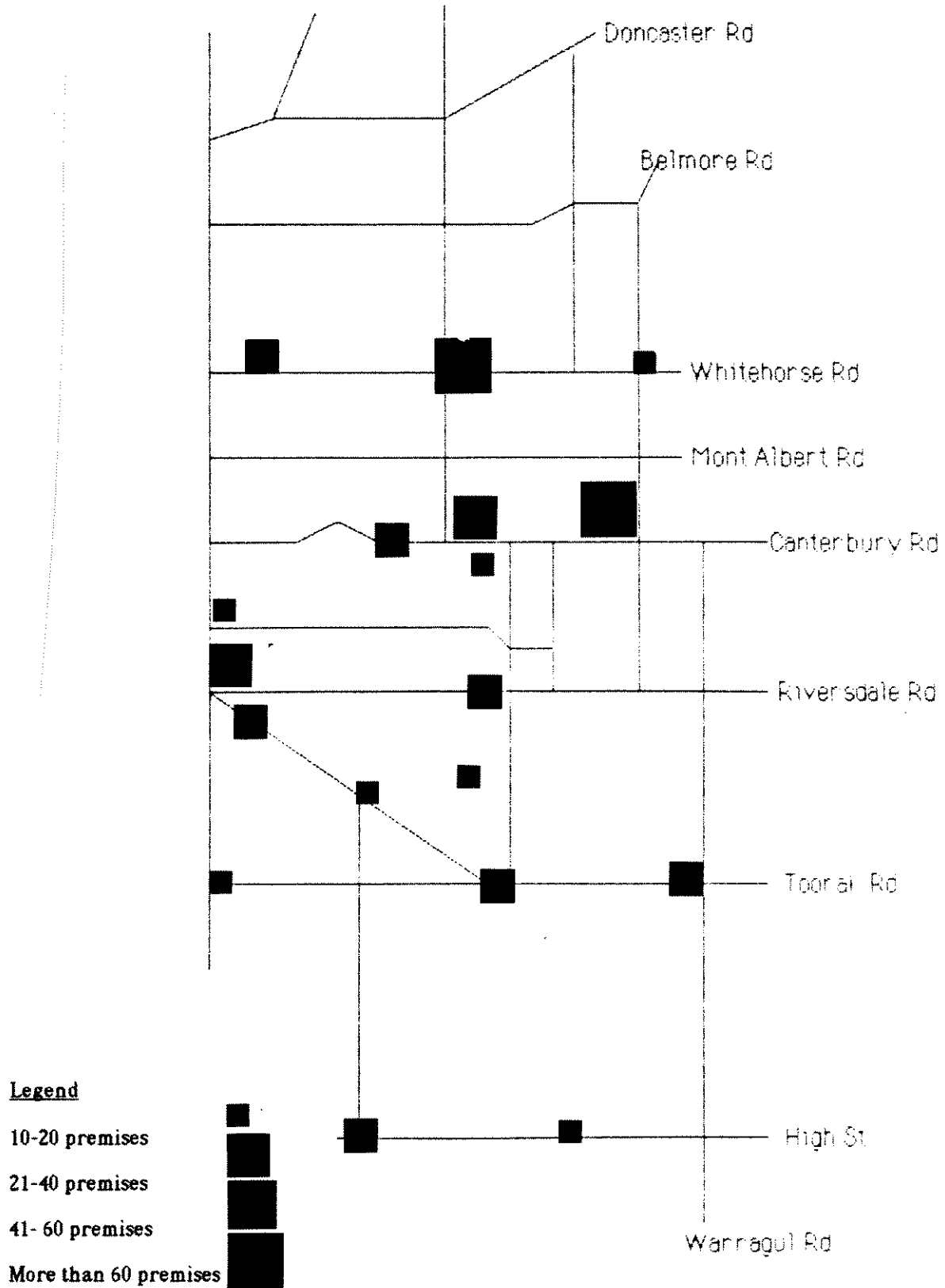
■ 5.5 Shopping hierarchy 1920



**Legend**

- 5-10 premises
- 11-20 premises
- 21-30 premises
- 31-50 premises
- More than 50 premises

■ 5.6 Shopping hierarchy 1930



## Chapter Six

# THE GARDEN SUBURB

"To Trees we owe not merely the beauty of the landscape, but much of that inner sense of well being which comes from realisation that man is himself a part of nature . . . of all living things, trees are the most companionable".<sup>1</sup> So claimed Camberwell council in 1952. For by then "the trees in the streets of Camberwell [were] widely known for their beauty and variety".<sup>2</sup> The street plantings of Camberwell, the parks and gardens and the remnants of natural vegetation are all important elements of the present townscape. Moreover, debates over types of street trees and uses of public parks demonstrate changing attitudes to Camberwell. As much as buildings, trees, parks and gardens give the suburb its present character and reflect its history.

### Elms and Oaks

Councillors first proposed planting street trees in 1872.<sup>3</sup> Several years later, in April 1879, Camberwell began to purchase street trees for planting, buying one hundred oaks, fifty elms and fifty "assorted trees" from the State Nursery at Mount Macedon.<sup>4</sup> Camberwell had been caught up in a more general interest in trees and forestry, a movement which led to state nurseries and state forests (the first at Ballarat and Creswick). The first streets planted were Belmore and Canterbury Rds. Planting continued over the following decade, along the major through roads and then in those few subdivisional roads which had passed to public control. In July 1889, the Camberwell curator and his staff were still planting along major roads and purchased elm trees for High St, Camberwell, Norwood, Summerhill, Riversdale, Canterbury, Whitehorse, Balwyn and Prospect Hill Rds. Oaks were bought for Mont Albert, Fermanagh and Alma Rds.<sup>5</sup>

Subdividers sometimes planted trees - for example the agents for the Windsor Park Estate in Surrey Hills, who "at great expense planted the avenues with valuable English Oak and Elm Trees".<sup>6</sup>

The depression of the 1890s seemed to put a brake on plantings and only in 1896 were the schemes of the 1880s continued. After approaches by residents, the councillors agreed to plant along the north side

of Mont Albert Rd but when more residents requested trees, council reaffirmed its policy of only planting along public roads.<sup>7</sup>

In 1898, outdoor workers planted 106 trees, concentrating on the north side of Mont Albert Rd.<sup>8</sup> In 1899, after turning down requests for trees in parts of Prospect Hill Rd, workmen went ahead and planted in Station St, Cross, Kintora, Norfolk and in Inglesby Rds. Workers completed Camberwell, Norwood and Canterbury Rd plantings in 1899 and 1900 and began on the west side of Brinsley Crt. Trees were also planted in Mangarra Rd and along Canterbury Rd (along the south side from the Outer Circle railway to Canterbury Station). By 1900, all the major streets had some runs of young elms or oaks. With their neat tree-guards and their spreading branches they had begun to hide the rawness of new subdivisions.

### Planes and resident complaints

By the turn of the century, Camberwell mirrored leafy English towns. Yet no sooner had the elms begun to rise up and shade the streets than they also alarmed householders. One Mahoney's Rd resident as early as 1898 had requested evergreen trees for his street, to be told that council would only plant deciduous trees. Some years later, when these trees had grown, residents demanded that council pull them out. Principal targets were elm trees, especially in streets such as Camberwell, Canterbury and Mont Albert Rds. After a string of complaints about elms, in 1912 council permitted Mr Harris Fraser to cut the roots of elm trees in front of his Camberwell Rd property.

Mr Fraser inspired a string of anti-elm followers.<sup>9</sup> By 1916, when workmen had planted more than five thousand trees in the streets of Camberwell, reports of the Reserves Committee raised the issue of tree removal.<sup>10</sup> In 1920 residents in Brinsley Crt opposed deciduous trees and asked for an alternative. In July 1923 the householders of Kingsley St demanded that the elms go. By 1926, the elms in Prospect Hill Rd were deemed unsuitable. For another decade council battled cries from householders wanting elms chopped down; many complained that their roots were

snaking into gardens, killing shrubs and weakening foundations. After years of these challenges to street plantings, councillors struggled to form a policy on tree removal in 1933. Brinsley Crt folk had their way when the street was modernised and trees rooted out and in Balwyn Rd and View St pin oaks replaced elms.<sup>11</sup> In June 1936 council agreed to uproot all the elms in Moorhouse St, Russell St and St Johns Ave.<sup>12</sup> In October, an era ended. The mighty elm at the corner of Mont Albert and Balwyn Rds was cut down; elms were no longer deemed "ornamental".<sup>13</sup>

While no doubt creeping roots fuelled the anti-elm chorus, other forces were at work in changing the character of the streets. In the 1920s, many householders asked for trees to go so they could put in driveways to their new garages. Others simply did not want deciduous trees dropping leaves and asked for evergreens. The tramways and bus authorities demanded that trees be cut back. Their branches drooped into roadways and tram drivers complained that they lost sight of pedestrians, horses and trucks because of the rows of elm trees darkening Camberwell roadways. Elms in Norwood Rd and Riversdale Rd troubled tram drivers and after much agonising, Camberwell agreed to take out trees alongside tram "loops". Councillor Read praised the wisdom of Camberwell's treeplanters but sadly agreed that "a municipality could not hold trees against life . . . the beautiful old landmarks would therefore have to go".<sup>14</sup>

More powerful than the tram-drivers were changes in taste and forest science. At the turn of the century native trees began to have a wider appeal, probably more for parks than street trees. Nevertheless in 1905 council began planting sugar gums along the railway line near their Kingston Rd depot. In July 1912, the curator purchased one hundred eucalypts for planting around council depots and railway lines rather than as ornamental street trees.<sup>15</sup> As the plantings continued around municipal depots, the local paper congratulated councillors. For even in planting at depots "the artistic element in the council has manifested itself".<sup>16</sup>

About the same time, George Coghill wrote asking that Monomeath Ave be planted. He suggested that

council make a choice between scarlet and white flowering gums and oaks (pin oaks, wainscoat oaks or white oaks).<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere, flowering gums were given a trial in streets running north and south and dark-leaved cherry plums on east-west streets. When residents of Payne Street objected to deciduous trees, the council planted cotton palms and white flowering gums. Palms appeared in other streets as well and in the same year "Phoenix canariensis" palms were planted in Turner St.<sup>18</sup> Two years later a Westbourne Gve and Monawai Rd were planted in "Cupressus torulosa".<sup>19</sup> Camberwell had seemingly abandoned the Englishness of the elm and tentatively explored native flora.

Another deciduous species proved more popular than either natives or evergreens; the plane tree. In response to cries of elm-hating residents in Brinsley Crt, workers planted plane trees instead.<sup>20</sup> As council came under pressure from varying directions about their elm trees, they chose to use pin oaks for street planting (purchasing one thousand for street planting in 1920). In 1923, Kingsley St residents followed the lead of those in Brinsley Crt and asked for all their elm trees to be removed and replaced with planes.<sup>21</sup>

Even plane trees failed to satisfy residents and many demanded removal of all deciduous trees even the younger planes. Residents in 1934 had confronted council on the issue of tree planting and challenged the Parks and Gardens Committee for refusing to remove individual trees from in front of properties. At the same time residents of Middle Rd thanked council for planting shrubs in their street.<sup>22</sup> The street tree struggles came to a head in 1938 when councillors objected to a decision of the Parks and Gardens Committee. The committee failed to order the removal of a tree from in front of a property in Wattle Valley Rd. One councillor complained that "the council knew the extensive damage these trees are doing to property throughout the city".<sup>23</sup> While agreeing to remove planes in Shierlaw Ave, the Parks and Gardens Committee continued to resist pressure to take out individual plane trees but did remove rows of the trees in favour of "shrubs" most likely prunus or hawthorn. Alternate English Oaks were taken out of Alma St in 1938 and replanting occurred at one hundred feet spacing.

## Recent Policies

Camberwell's first tree-plantings sprang from a desire to turn streets into a sentimental image of provincial England. Hence councillors chose to line streets with elms and oaks. When these proved too difficult to manage council turned to plane trees. These too fell foul of householders and scientific managers of trees. A new generation of horticultural experts had turned away from large deciduous species in favour of smaller more easily managed trees.

Despite such changes, in restating their approach to street trees, council chose the earlier plantings as the most distinctive. In 1936 for example one council pamphlet reminded ratepayers that:

*trees in the streets of Camberwell are known far and wide for their beauty and variety . . . two outstanding streets are Monomeath Avenue which is planted with Pin Oak (Quercus palustris) and Victoria Avenue, planted with Oriental Plane Trees.*<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, the 1930s plantings were of a different style. Streets were planted with deciduous as well as evergreens; "the smaller growing kinds [which] do not interfere with street lighting . . . are now coming into favour".<sup>25</sup> Favourites amongst these were hawthorn and prunus giving "a delightful effect in the Spring".

In a 1952 publication, the same two distinctive streets, Monomeath Ave and Victoria Ave appeared to best indicate the charm of Camberwell. Elsewhere the policies of the 1930s continued with a plan to take out every alternate elm and plane tree. Newer streets were planted with hawthorn and prunus; trees with less aggressive root systems and which didn't block street lighting. From that point "many of the newer streets [were] planted alternately with deciduous and evergreen trees with fine effect".<sup>26</sup> The initial plantings had been at fifty feet and in the 1930s this was reduced to one hundred foot intervals. In 1943 the removal scheme had extended from elms and planes to the more recent plantings of palms.<sup>27</sup> Immediately after the Second World War, council resumed its planting policy but with manpower shortages could not fill all of the demands for street trees. The new policy in post-war Camberwell was to maintain a

seventy foot spacing with provision for residents to "plant a tree of their choice (subject to approval) if they so desire".<sup>28</sup>

Increasingly residents were invited to participate in tree care and choice. In 1977, residents were given a range of choices in trees for their streets. Street tree strategy in the 1980s allowed for residents to choose their own trees. It also stressed the need to reinforce existing groupings of older evergreen and deciduous plantings. Camberwell still responds to resident requests for trees but where in the past policy swung from one species to another, in the 1980s strategy was directed to conserving existing character in particular areas.<sup>29</sup> In 1988 residents were asked to comment on proposals for trees in their streets and asked that "if a tree is planted outside your home your assistance to care for and water the tree will help the tree grow and to beautify and improve the environment in which we work, play and live".<sup>30</sup>

## The nature strip

If one aspect of suburban life has been lampooned more than any other it is the suburban nature strip. The geometrically exact, smoothly-textured strip of lawn between footpath and kerb is now an icon for stand-up comedians, a title for collections of poetry and a symbol of suburban order. The Melbourne nature strip distinguishes suburb from city and it is only where streets are wide and there is a strip of greenery between footpath and roadway that true suburbia commences. Camberwell more than many other suburbs took to the nature strip with gusto. Camberwell had streets wide enough for a verge between walkway and roadway. When council began to pull out the feared elms, many houses were left staring onto a blank and rough gravel strip beyond the front fence. Some residents began to plant this with tough grasses. In 1920 LA Mellor wrote to the council asking for permission to plant buffalo grass on the "outer edge" of the footpath in front of his home in Chaucer Street.

By then ideas of "Garden Suburbs" had won some acclaim in Australia. The Garden Suburb, a watered-down version of Ebenezer Howard's grand scheme for a Garden City, indicated a part of the city fringe in which housing and plantings were harmonised.<sup>31</sup>



The verge between footpath and roadway formed an essential element in the ideal Garden Suburb. During the 1920s many of Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs vied for the title of Premier Garden Suburb. Malvern had its own planted street lawns, but if Graham McInnes' Malvern street (Grace St) was any guide they did not measure up to those in Camberwell. To approach his home from neighbouring Coonil Cres, a visitor could "note innumerable short cuts across buffalo grass verges which despite the vigilance of local council, continue to be trodden out by residents and tradesmen as means of shortening distance between two points".<sup>32</sup>

Mr Mellor of Chaucer St clearly set in train a more respected form of street garden. Ten years later Camberwell won the *Herald* gardening competition. So thrilled by this was the Camberwell council that it organised its own competition for Camberwell residents only, with special emphasis on what was to become the "nature strip". The competition organisers stressed that:

*Gardens will be assumed to begin from the footpath kerb outside the fence. Councillors believe this will encourage citizens to keep their footpath strips in good order and also to remove unsightly fences . . . the city as a whole will benefit.*<sup>33</sup>

A few years later the city's "Street Lawns" won glowing official praise, extending the street lawn to either side of the paved pathway. In "Know Your City" ratepayers were informed that:

*The Council especially appreciates the efforts of the many citizens who regularly mow and keep the street lawns fronting their homes in order thus enhancing the beauty of the City . . . it is the policy of the Council to leave a narrow strip of soil between the paving and building line, and delightful effects are obtained in many instances with Dwarf Nasturtiums, Sweet Alyssum, Nepeta, Armeria, Lippia and various kinds of rock plants.*<sup>34</sup>

With wider street alignments and a forceful policy of paving, kerbing and guttering, as well as spacing between trees as council followed removal policies, the "street lawn" or "nature strip" seemed the logical progression for an ideal Garden Suburb, one which

since then has survived to become an essential item in any suburban street.

### The first reserves

In the middle of the summer of 1873, delegates from several Melbourne municipalities met the Minister of Lands to complain about the costs of public parks in the suburbs. Heading the delegation, one councillor from Fitzroy reminded the Minister that it was unfair to expect local councils such as his to care for the "fencing and ornamentation of a reserve" since this was a "national" and not a local concern.

Within a few weeks Camberwell councillors had begun to debate their own role with regards to public parks and offered to sell part of the Camberwell Reserve; a motion to prevent the sale was carried and the council reserve committee then let out the site to local stock holders who promised to keep the planted portion of the park "in good order".<sup>35</sup> Over the following one hundred years, residents, councillors and visitors have regularly pictured parks and gardens as the lifeblood of Camberwell. Council, and earlier the Boroondara Road Board, turned open space into parks and gardens, first of all through land from the crown and then from a concerted drive to purchase and redesign open land in the shire and city. These gardens were given distinct forms and in each there were occasional conflicts about use and appearance.

The first open spaces were more for agricultural than ornamental purposes. The Gardiner's Creek Reserve was first set aside as a Farmer's Common, along the boundary of Boroondara and Gardiner. Camberwell Reserve was gazetted as a recreation reserve in 1869, although for many years it had remained rough woodland; cattle grazed on the grass and local residents occasionally stole wood from stands of timber.<sup>36</sup> Even after the Reserve was fenced (during 1873) it was still used for grazing sheep. Camberwell Cricket Club made its home on the reserve and put up a pavilion and in 1875 the first seats were placed around the reserve. In 1881 two hundred pine trees were planted. The reserve was enclosed in a picket fence, although Hutchins, the butcher (and councillor), turned his sheep onto the grass between cricket matches, at a charge of one shilling a week. A bowling green and tennis club took up part of the space in 1889.<sup>37</sup> Many residents opposed this and ten years

later amidst much discussion, the permissive occupancy of the bowling and tennis clubs was challenged. Council eventually resolved to alienate no further land in the reserve.<sup>38</sup>

In response to disputes over the Reserve, plans were drawn up in 1895 for a new Canterbury Recreation Reserve (East Boroondara Reserve); following meetings between clubs who might use the space, the council went ahead and purchased five acres at £75 per acre.<sup>39</sup> Sporting clubs which had played on the old reserve now moved along Camberwell Rd, to a sports field which still survives. Free of its sportsmen, the original Reserve became ornamental gardens part of which were replaced by extensions to the municipal offices.

### Gardens as ornaments

Ornamental gardens were first proposed at Broadway at the turn of the century and council decided to pay for half of the cost if residents could raise the remainder. By November 1904 residents had collected £50 towards these gardens.<sup>40</sup> In the following March, council considered alternatives lay-outs for footpaths, shade trees, ornamental flower beds and lawns. For £5 an independent "expert" arrived in Camberwell to comment on the plans.<sup>41</sup> During this reworking of the public space, the Curator, Fritz Grebner, went absent without leave and lost his job. The new curator, Henry Barnard, set about putting his own emphasis on the design of new public reserves in Camberwell, beginning with the Broadway Gardens where purchase was finalised in 1906.<sup>42</sup>

Further disputes ensued in which council representatives on the management committee resigned. At the same time alterations went on in the Camberwell Reserve, now Gardens, with the pine trees removed and a new more gardenesque lay-out adopted.<sup>43</sup>

In 1905 the principal ornamental gardens of Camberwell were shaped. The Town Hall Reserve, Canterbury Gardens, Surrey Gardens and Broadway Gardens were given a similar treatment. Surrey Gardens were designed with french borders or garden beds, small shrubs, quick growing trees, ten garden seats, lawns and ornamental trees as well as pathways.<sup>44</sup> The original plan for rockeries was abandoned in favour of open gravelled space and the plan for round flower beds in the centre of the gardens was done away

with.<sup>45</sup> The Read Gardens or Broadway Gardens were set out in much the same manner with flowering shrubs and roses.<sup>46</sup>

The Canterbury Gardens had initially been the work of GG Nercy and the Canterbury Progress Association in 1903-4 and advice had come from Guilfoyle of the Botanic Gardens. Council took over the gardens in April 1905.<sup>47</sup> The curator originally proposed a small lake and "rustic bridge" (replaced in 1914). The Lake and Shady Dell were filled and planted along with rockeries in 1906 and in 1916 the rose bed was extended. In 1918 sugar gums were cut back and a hedge of cypress was recommended (*Lambertiana horizontalis*) which would do a better job than gums in hiding the unsightly fence of Goldings Hall.<sup>48</sup>

Sporting clubs continued with their own use of space in Camberwell. The Cricket Club, elevated to the district competition, asked for council to level the playing field but lost the support of councillors. Council looked closely at occupants of the East Boroondara Reserve, used exclusively for cricket and football by St Paul's Canterbury Football Club and Canterbury Grammar School Society. While agreeing to some improvements, the manner in which team sports expropriated public space for exclusive club use troubled councillors for many years.

Both parks and street tree types were similar with plane trees common in both. In December 1908 English elms were used on poorer or drier ground although in places the curator recommended sugar gums, ficus, *Cupressus lambertiana* and pepper trees as shade trees.<sup>49</sup> Cypress for example was chosen to screen unsightly developments, so that in 1911 when council wanted to screen its Trafalgar Rd depot it chose cypress since it was upright, evergreen, close growing and required less trimming. Similarly in 1922 pine trees in the north-east of the Canterbury Sports Ground were removed and replaced with cypress or pittosporum. Recent storms played havoc with the pines.<sup>50</sup>

### Recreational space

In Australian cities, as in the United States and Britain, public open space was expected to fill a range of functions. In Camberwell open public land was put

to practical use for grazing, as it was on fringes around all cities. Ornamental designs were initially to make these rough pastures into "pleasure grounds", places for restful and perhaps educative strolls. Early in the twentieth century, new notions of the use of parks spread from the United States. There the progressive movement criticised the romantic anti-urban impulse in much nineteenth-century park design. Instead they wanted parks to have a recreational role; as a sports ground and as well as children's playgrounds. Promoters of the new sorts of public space wanted parks to be active lungs in cities and not miniature arcadias.<sup>51</sup> In Camberwell the design for parks at the turn of the century still reflected a more traditional approach to open space; they were to be picturesque and restful not places for vigorous activity.

No sooner were gardens shaped along these romantic lines, than residents wanted to use them for new sorts of recreational activity. HA Howard wrote to council asking for a bioscope screen in Canterbury Gardens. He even demanded that council cut trees obscuring the view of the movie screen.<sup>52</sup> Howard wanted a rockery and fountain in the gardens (eventually erected on the canna bed by the Canterbury Concert Committee) Others approached council to have a bandstand erected in Surrey Gardens, although they were not able to present council with plans.<sup>53</sup> The bandstand was finally erected in 1912. About the same time the Canterbury Empire Day and Citizens Concert Committee raised a fountain, in somewhat belated recollection of Queen Victoria, in the Canterbury Gardens.<sup>54</sup> Impressed by neither the price (£150) nor the aesthetics, Councillor Maling thought the council could have done a far better job for about a third of the cost. As it was the fountain, to his eyes, "presented a somewhat prehistoric and old-fashioned appearance".<sup>55</sup>

The Canterbury Concert Committee charged for entrance to concerts in the gardens and wanted picket fencing extended while in Surrey Hills another group wanted to put an electric cable through the gardens and hold open air concerts.<sup>56</sup> Canterbury Sports Ground was also the subject of deputations from cricketers wanting two memorial guns removed. At the Canterbury Sports Ground, cricketers and council reached a compromise where the cricket pavilion was removed

and re-erected at the west end of the ground, near the tennis pavilion with an additional room at the rear and while the guns kept their place (until removed to Surrey Gardens in 1919) the nearby flagpole was shifted.<sup>57</sup>

### New park styles

This interest in active recreation rather than passive repose led Camberwell to create a network of parks. Council formed a special committee to "keep a sharp look-out" for suitable land for new parks. Camberwell also claimed to have originated a system of resident and councillor committees for reserves with powers to raise money through individual leasing arrangements.<sup>58</sup> Local committees and leases were innovative. At the same time they heightened tension between new and old attitudes to public space.

In 1905 council had moved to create a park in Highfield Rd and by 1915 the Canterbury Progress Association and the Hartwell Progress Association had won places on the management committee of Highfield Park.<sup>59</sup> Reflecting the divide between recreation and repose, they were soon bickering about the style of their park. In 1920 several residents approached council demanding that Highfield Park be used only as a sporting reserve.<sup>60</sup> Others wanted more plantings, pathways and garden beds.

New parks created between the wars differed from the gardens of Edwardian Camberwell. Amongst the new style of public open space was the playground at Hartwell Railway Station. Alongside children's playgrounds, council controlled sixteen playing fields.<sup>61</sup> A new lay-out was approved for Verdun Park in 1936.<sup>62</sup> The Camberwell Gardens were re-assessed and the shrubbery and a red gum were removed and the area replanted with dwarf shrubs and a central flower bed, inspired by the design for Broadway (Read) Gardens.<sup>63</sup>

Amidst the purchase of new parks and the stress on sports grounds and children's playgrounds, ornamental gardens, like Camberwell or Broadway lost some of their attractiveness by the 1930s. Neighbouring residents complained about the state of Canterbury Gardens. E Fysh wrote in 1934 that the gardens were being spoiled by poplars and a solitary gum tree was being "ruthlessly" cut down, an act of official

“vandalism”.<sup>64</sup> Councillor Warner agreed that this was the “height of vulgarity”; to remove a tree for a flower garden. As Mr Fysh noted, the trees, unlike flowers, had been planted by pioneers who reclaimed the gardens “from the wild”; they were the “lungs of the town”.<sup>65</sup> The gardens however continued to be altered with a memorial sun-dial in 1937.<sup>66</sup> By the time of the Second World continued piecemeal “improvements” destroyed the harmony of their initial designs.

An emphasis on films and band concerts at Canterbury and the Surrey Gardens suggested that purely passive contemplation of arcadian beauty no longer held such wide appeal. Where Camberwell purchased additional open space, this was more likely to be for active sporting residents.

When new parks were not for sport, they were often different in character from the Edwardian gardens. In 1916, members of the newly-formed Balwyn Progress Association “numbering over twenty invaded the Camberwell City Council’s chamber . . . urging that a park should be acquired in the vicinity of One Tree Hill” (reputedly the highest spot in the metropolis (440 feet).<sup>67</sup> One Tree Hill became Beckett Park and opened in June 1917. Camberwell went on to purchase JM Watson’s collection of native trees; “Watson’s Paddock” in Parring Road (alongside the One Tree Hill). Watson had bought three and a half acres for a private garden in 1904. A member of the Field Naturalists Club, Watson had collected native specimens and the gardens, despite later plantings, were a product of his efforts.<sup>68</sup> A resident of Chaucer Cres, Camberwell, he died on 20 August 1926 and control of his gardens was assumed by council on his death.<sup>69</sup>

As Maranoa Gardens, this unique collection of native trees sat alongside Beckett Park in Balwyn. During the 1920s and 1930s, Frederick Chapman, one of the management committee, extended Watson’s collection as well as searching out plants and categorising the gardens.<sup>70</sup> The open park and the adjoining native garden were neither a public playing field nor a garden with northern hemisphere plantings or layout. Camberwell had created something quite distinctive in public open space.

Maranoa Gardens also sustained a tradition whereby visiting dignitaries were invited to plant trees. Or else trees were planted in honour of prominent local figures. So for example in April 1938 a tree was planted in memory of Henry A Howard, member of several local associations and promoter of parks and gardens in Camberwell. Other trees bear the names of Dame Clara Butt, Lord and Lady Somers, Lord and Lady Stradbroke. Mrs Edith Campbell, Harvey K Eustace and Lady Forster. The Gardens have a fine Bangalow Palm planted by Lady Huntingfield.<sup>71</sup>

Neighbouring Beckett Park had become a favourite open space for bonfires on Empire Night. Just as the patrons of Canterbury Gardens took some time to come to terms with Queen Victoria’s death, Camberwell pyrotechnicians were slow to acknowledge imperial death-throes. They insisted on celebrating the great British Empire as its colonies grew restive and the bonfire of 1949 was acclaimed “the biggest ever”.<sup>72</sup> Local pride was also invested in the park and following the Centenary of Victoria, the stone of the Camberwell Centenary Tower was laid in 1937. Built of Briagolong stone it rose to forty feet and cost £888, half met by council.<sup>73</sup> The tower, claimed one of its key promoters, AA Meyers, had “fascinating impulses” and would be a permanent monument to the “march of progress” through the preceding century. It would he announced, “at once place Camberwell among the very few cities in Australia to possess lasting and useful evidence of endeavour to commemorate an event of time”.<sup>74</sup>

Once Camberwell established a Reserves Purchase Committee, it was constantly approached by local and metropolitan bodies pressing for more parks. As well they found local landholders (possibly in reaction to Unimproved Value Ratings) wanting to sell their land for parks.

Perhaps inspired by Watson’s success, Frank Buckley offered to sell the water-filled quarry known as “Buckley’s Hole” to council. JA Barrett and the Children’s Playgrounds Association of Victoria taxed council about the need to set aside land for a children’s playground in Camberwell.<sup>75</sup> The subdividers of the Camberwell City Heights Pty Ltd transferred an area for a park in their subdivision and the Hartwell Progress Association pressed council to purchase

Mornane's Paddock off Summerhill Rd. While council acted on these demands they still refused to take up offers from Buckley to purchase his clay-hole.<sup>76</sup>

Sometimes when council approached other bodies on parks they were rebuffed. So for example when they asked the Education Department to take over half of the "Lower Reserve" in Camberwell Reserve for use as a girls playground the offer was refused.

The huge expanse of the Ashburton Forest had attracted visitors for decades and the Australian Natives Association, as well as the National Parks Association urged council to purchase part of the "Gum Tree Forest" as a native park. Council passed on the request to the Town Planning Association.<sup>77</sup> Groups with a membership beyond Camberwell, demanded action on parks in 1920 and 1921. The National Parks Association and the Victorian Tree Planting Association had sent deputations to council. The Victorian Treeplanting Association conducted annual conferences at the National Herbarium, regularly attended by representatives of all metropolitan councils.<sup>78</sup>

Once council began purchasing land they had to negotiate responsible prices. When TM Burke offered to set aside a public reserve in one of his subdivisions, council was not prepared to act on the offer until the subdivider lodged £500 to pay for street paving.<sup>79</sup> Many new subdivisions did get public reserves. After a decision which drew irate responses from other groups claiming favouritism a thirteen-acre park was created in the new Golf Links Estate in 1926.<sup>80</sup>

Along Gardiner's Creek the Glen Iris Brick and Tile Company offered to sell 4-5 acres for a reserve at £50 per acre and WG Hiscock sold 30 acres in Belmore Rd for a reserve. The Belmore Rd land earned the name Myrtle Park at the suggestion of the Playgrounds Acquisition League.<sup>81</sup> By 1925 the council still held out against purchasing Buckley's Hole, now Buckley's Lake and at the same time had acquired three acres of land from Mornane in Summerhill Rd for £1000.<sup>82</sup> Council eventually succumbed to Mr Buckley and bought his clay-hole; in 1928 it became Willow Glen.<sup>83</sup>

When building slowed during the depression more landowners sought to offload land onto council. In 1932 AE Hancock offered to sell land for a reserve between Hartwell Hill and Camberwell Rds.<sup>84</sup> The state government released funds for parks and gardens as a centenary measure in 1933 and councils in Melbourne took on sustenance workers to improve gardens; in Camberwell, Buckley's Clay-hole was one of those improved.<sup>85</sup> Buckley's Lake (Willow Glen) was beautified in March 1936.<sup>86</sup>

### Local societies and parks

Camberwell's parks purchasing committee responded to regular demands, from sporting clubs and local progress associations. When, for example, the Camberwell football club was admitted to the Victorian Football Association in 1926, proud club officials expected a new grandstand and press box as well as better terraces on the Sports Ground. Council set aside space for the East Camberwell Tennis Club in Riversdale Park and a "Jazz Pavilion" for dancing and evening entertainment in Canterbury Gardens.<sup>87</sup>

Less successful were the South Camberwell Progress Association who asked council to begin work on Bowen Gardens and the Glen Iris residents who found council unwilling to extend Glen Iris Park to the west side of Brixton Rise.<sup>88</sup> And not satisfied with success in their efforts over the Beckett Gardens, the Balwyn Progress Association wanted a band stand and pavilion in Balwyn Park.<sup>89</sup> The Ashburton Progress Association pestered council for a park in Ashburton. Eventually council purchased land from R Ennis in High Street for a reserve in Ashburton.<sup>90</sup>

Despite Camberwell's proud record on parks and gardens, several organisations were less happy about the parks of the suburb. The Field Naturalists Club had taken the council to task for not caring for parks and gardens. In November 1920, Camberwell invited the president and members of the Field Naturalist Club of Victoria to the council's nursery, hoping to assuage their fears.<sup>91</sup>

As well as parks, swimming pools were designed for active and healthy recreation. The city engineer, SG Goldsworthy shaped the new baths like a tennis racquet, with an octagonal pool and long swimming lane extending from it. At the opening, the Mayor

proudly announced that Camberwell was a progressive city in which council put the health of residents put first.<sup>92</sup>

### A park system

Changes in parks and gardens between the wars reflected several forces. New ideas about playgrounds and native national parks had some influence. Progress associations demanded more sporting grounds. Sports clubs themselves wanted new club rooms and exclusive rights to some parks. Buyers in new subdivisions and the subdividers were always keen to sell land for parks. Individual owners often wanted to offload land on the ratepayers. Underlying most of these requests was the belief that Camberwell ought to be a comfortable garden suburb; a place of private homes set in trees, grass and flowers. Along with such open-air ornaments, a healthy suburban life demanded playing fields for parents and children.

### Parks and people

The impetus for parks and gardens came from Camberwell people themselves. The Surrey and Canterbury Gardens were local initiatives and many other gardens appeared because of local campaigns, especially from the fringes of the municipality where residents assumed that they would be neglected.

In 1946 several of these bodies gathered together to demand parks and gardens throughout the municipality. Mr Fraser from Ashburton argued that parklands be "reserved entirely for the use of the whole of the people with full access thereto by the public". Mr Prouse from the Glen Iris Progress Association asked for an increase in parkland pointing out that whereas Camberwell had six per cent of its land in parkland, ratepayers were asking for ten per cent as a reasonable ratio. He also demanded that sporting clubs ought to have "open" and not "closed" memberships and that all sports grounds be without fences and give free admission.<sup>93</sup> Glen Iris had been at the centre of continuing battles about sports grounds and the Progress Association had demanded that council pass a by-law to establish change rooms as soon as a sports ground was created.<sup>94</sup> Such arguments continued and in 1964 the Highfield Park Protest Committee opposed council plans to convert the open space into two sporting fields.<sup>95</sup>

Since then resident interest in parks and gardens has to an extent swung away from the use of public space for competitive sport. Many have renewed interest in older park designs. Camberwell is still a suburb of parks, but parks which reflect changing perceptions about the proper role of urban open space. The history of local parks reflects a single-minded desire on the part of residents to maintain Camberwell as a garden suburb, where trees and gardens have as much significance as buildings.

### Natural Camberwell

In 1952, Camberwell Council claimed that parks in the suburb were "moulded in harmony with natural surroundings".<sup>96</sup> Since few were aware of just what constituted these natural surroundings, most of the shaping of Camberwell occurred in distinction to natural environs.

The waterways of Camberwell on which natural life depended were speedily reshaped and replanted. Council workers had proudly planted two thousand osier willows along creek banks in 1893. Along most watercourses, native ferns were lost as willows and thistles spread.<sup>97</sup> Several creeks were often no more than damp tips. In 1893, for example, the council inspector visited the property of John Holding "at the extreme end of Balwyn Road". Here he found the creek contaminated since "a quantity of nightsoil had been recently deposited and not properly covered over with earth . . . should rain occur a quantity of nightsoil would be washed into the Koonung Creek which is used for watering cattle".<sup>98</sup> A few years later council officers were shocked at the state of streams which in summer became "a series of waterholes holding sewage".<sup>99</sup> Still, such conditions did not prevent boys like Graham McInnes exploring Gardiner's Creek in the 1920s. By then, near where it flowed under Burke Rd, it was "a sluggish muddy tributary which flowed into the Yarra . . . opposite an immense gasholder the creek bank was broken by the outfall of three large storm drains".<sup>100</sup> Smaller creeks were barrelled and sometimes channelled and straightened. Well into the twentieth century, even when they were not used for sewage, they still carried the run-off from roads and were popular dumping grounds.<sup>101</sup> In 1905 the Camberwell health inspector inspected a creek valley in East Camberwell where residents complained that "rats breed and thrive in

the garbage". One resident thought that ratepayers' money would be better spent on cleaning up creeks rather than being wasted with "extravagant sums [spent] buying almost useless reserves".<sup>102</sup> Parts of the Gardiner's Creek did retain a pre-European character in the 1920s, as the McInnes brothers discovered.<sup>103</sup> Sneaking out of their Malvern home one evening, Graham and Colin:

*tramped on through the night past Glen Iris, which was the end of the carline over the bridge at Gardiner's Creek . . . dawn found us near the Ashburton billabong in among sheoaks and straggly ironbark . . . while we hesitated the sun came up and birds began to sing . . . the Grimm's fairytale atmosphere of ogresses and trolls and norns rolled backward with the night and sunny Australia reasserted itself.*<sup>104</sup>

Away from the water, imported species flora and fauna changed the face of open land. Thistle and furze cloaked vacant blocks. Under Vermin Destruction and Thistle Acts, council officers constantly sought to control their spread and charged untidy owners.<sup>105</sup> More worrying were the imported birds. An eager participant in a sparrow conference in 1896, Camberwell, along with nearby municipalities, set aside Saturday 11 and Saturday 18 July 1896 as "General Poisoning Days". Three hundredweight of poisoned wheat was distributed amongst any dray driver passing the shire hall, to be spread a long the roads of Camberwell. With poisoned minahs and sparrows dropping out of Camberwell trees, council even decided that in the following years Camberwell and Malvern would hold annual poisoning competitions. No doubt this rid Camberwell of imported birds for a time. Still, council offered rewards to anyone able to come forward with an idea for destroying starlings.<sup>106</sup> Even in the 1920s residents still appealed to council to be able to take out their guns and shoot down starlings.

The image of Camberwell by the 1880s was of an English countryside of hedges and flowering bushes. Subdividers and home gardeners did their utmost to extirpate any vestigial native flora. David Meredith was dismayed to find that in Beverley Park Gardens Estate there was not one tree. Yet he conjured up a picture of what Glen Iris must have looked

like before the farmer and suburbanite did their damage:

*I pictured this knoll as having two or three good sturdy blue-gums or stringybarks on the crest, and slopes brown with bracken . . . the place could have been really beautiful at one time in a tranquil sort of way.*<sup>107</sup>

During Meredith's unhappy sojourn off High St, he could have walked to the remnants of natural Camberwell. Well into the twentieth century, "Ashburton Forest" attracted day-trippers from the city and inner suburbs. Residents regularly fought to save parts of the forest and Mornane's Paddock in Summerhill Rd was eventually purchased by council. Gnarled eucalypts from the forest remained in the yard of St Michael's Catholic School, Ashburton in the 1950s, but Mornane's Paddock appears now to have lost most of its trees.

Belmont Park survived in its "natural state" in the 1930s, despite the curator's longing to remove native trees (because they attracted caterpillars).<sup>108</sup> The park had been donated by Mrs Reid in memory of her late husband in 1913. It was then seen as a last reminder of the pre-European landscape "rendered parklike by its level sward and many gum trees, all full-foliaged and well-grown . . . it is a piece of primeval bush, in which the presence of the axe-man and the fire-fiend is tabooed".<sup>109</sup> Elsewhere, along the route of the Darling railway, engineers in the 1920s reported that the countryside carried a "scant growth of stringybark, box and a little redgum".<sup>110</sup> Perhaps the last remaining environs of pre-European Camberwell lie along the Outer Circle railway, between Burwood and Ashburton stations; what was built as a supposed boon to suburban growth has paradoxically safeguarded native vegetation.<sup>111</sup>

### Summary

The remnants of pre-European Camberwell are interesting for their rarity. Amongst the various attempts to mould a new natural Camberwell, councillors and residents have chosen trees for streets, laid down ornamental gardens and used open space for sport and children's playgrounds.

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The shapes of parks and the character of street trees always resulted in some debate and confusion. Deciduous elms were first favoured for street trees until oaks and planes attracted residents. After experimenting with several imported trees Camberwell concentrated on hawthorn with later plantings of camphor laurel, liquid amber and other shrub-like trees.<sup>112</sup> Native trees, especially flowering gums, were planted in several streets.

After years of planting and uprooting, Camberwell now has a policy of strengthening local planting character and within certain limits assisting residents in choosing their own street trees. Where for years the character of ornamental gardens was distorted through uncoordinated additions, these gardens are now appreciated more for their original designs. And while argument still continues between those who want passive as against active use of open space, Camberwell's sports grounds are an important part of the suburb's character. Parks and gardens have always played a part in local identity and contributed to the self-image of Camberwell. In any conservation planning they deserve the same attention as the buildings of the city.

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- 1 Council of the City of Camberwell, *City of Camberwell*, 1952.
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 Council minutes, various dates, August 1872.
- 4 On the renewed interest in forestry in the 1870s see, Tony Dingle, *The Victorians vol 2, Settling*, McMahons Point 1983, use index.
- 5 Council minutes, 17 July 1889.
- 6 Surrey Hills Historical Society, "Surrey Hills: In Celebration".
- 7 Council minutes, 13 July 1897 and 31 May 1897.
- 8 *Ibid*, 20 June 1898.
- 9 *Ibid*, 25 November 1912.
- 10 *Advertiser*, 1 July 1916.
- 11 *Ibid*, 16 March 1936.
- 12 Council minutes, 13 June 1932.
- 13 *Ibid*, 19 October 1932.
- 14 *Argus*, 26 December 1926.
- 15 *Ibid*, 29 July 1912.
- 16 *Advertiser*, 8 March 1913.
- 17 Council minutes, 17 June 1912.
- 18 *Ibid*, 26 July 1926.
- 19 *Ibid*, 20 August 1928.
- 20 *Ibid*, 13 November 1920.
- 21 *Ibid*, 23 July 1923.
- 22 *Free Press*, 1 November 1934.
- 23 Council minutes 18 July 1938 and Camberwell *Free Press* cutting, CLHC, undated.
- 24 City of Camberwell, "Know Your City", series no 1, 1936-37.
- 25 *Ibid*.
- 26 Council of the City of Camberwell, *The City of Camberwell*, 1952.
- 27 Parks and gardens report, *Camberwell Free Press*, 23 June 1943.
- 28 *Camberwell City News*, 4 December 1977.
- 29 "Street character analysis", City of Camberwell 1985.
- 30 *Camberwell City News*, May-June 1988, vol 3 no 3.
- 31 See Relph, *Modern Urban Landscape*, pp 61-62 and P Hall *Cities of Tomorrow*, Oxford 1988, pp 68-69.
- 32 McInnes, *Road to Gundagai*, p 77.
- 33 *Herald*, 1 April 1930.
- 34 "Know Your city".
- 35 *Advertiser*, 7 March 1873, 16 May 1873.
- 36 Allan, "Camberwell".
- 37 Council minutes, 4 November 1889.
- 38 *Ibid*, 28 March 1898.
- 39 *Ibid*, 8 April 1896, 20 May 1895, 26 August 1895.
- 40 *Ibid*, 7 November 1904, 19 December 1904.
- 41 *Ibid*, 6 March 1905.
- 42 Minutes, 23 July 1906, 22 October 1906.
- 43 *Ibid*, 10 July 1905.
- 44 Curators reports, 15 September 1905.
- 45 Council minutes, 18 September 1905.
- 46 Curators reports 15 September 1905.
- 47 *Free Press*, 6 September 1934.
- 48 Card Index, CLHC.
- 49 Curator's quarterly reports, December 1908, CLHC.
- 50 *Ibid*.
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- <sup>51</sup> See G Cranz, *The politics of park design: a history of urban parks*, Cambridge US 1982.
- <sup>52</sup> Council minutes, 22 January 1912.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, 24 April 1912. At the same time a new design was submitted for Boroondara Park and the Camberwell Cricket Club continued to press for improvements.
- <sup>54</sup> *Advertiser*, 24 August 1912.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 31 August 1912.
- <sup>56</sup> Council minutes, 11 November 1912.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 4 June 1912.
- <sup>58</sup> *Argus*, 28 February 1924.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 23 February 1915.
- <sup>60</sup> Council minutes, 1 March 1920.
- <sup>61</sup> Council minutes, 17 February 1936, 2 March 1936.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 30 June 1936.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, 13 July 1936.
- <sup>64</sup> *Advertiser*, 5 July 1934.
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 2 August 1934.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 16 September 1937.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 17 January 1916.
- <sup>68</sup> *Free Press*, 12 May 1938.
- <sup>69</sup> Council minutes, 24 August 1926.
- <sup>70</sup> *Free Press*, 22 November 1944.
- <sup>71</sup> City of Camberwell, "Maranoa Gardens".
- <sup>72</sup> *Camberwell Courier*, 18 May 1949.
- <sup>73</sup> *Camberwell Free Press*, 29 April 1937, 26 August 1937.
- <sup>74</sup> *Free Press*, 22 November 1934.
- <sup>75</sup> Council minutes, 1 February 1921, 28 February 1921, 13 June 1921.
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, 5 February 1923, 12 February 1923.
- <sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 12 April 1926, 10 May 1926.
- <sup>78</sup> *Argus*, 11 December 1929.
- <sup>79</sup> Council minutes, 24 September 1923.
- <sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 23 August 1926.
- <sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, 14 May 1923.
- <sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 15 January 1925.
- <sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 3 September 1928.
- <sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 17 October 1932.
- <sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, 15 May 1933.
- <sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, 31 March 1936.
- <sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 26 July 1920, 23 August 1920.
- <sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 9 June 1923.
- <sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 7 November 1921.
- <sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, 27 March 1933.
- <sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, 22 November 1920, 13 September. 1920.
- <sup>92</sup> *Argus*, 19 November 1927.
- <sup>93</sup> Conference of ratepayers and council, 14–15 May 1946, typescript notes, CLHC.
- <sup>94</sup> *Free Press*, 21 April 1938.
- <sup>95</sup> *Herald*, 20 August 1964.
- <sup>96</sup> *The City of Camberwell*, 1952.
- <sup>97</sup> LR Evans, "An historical geography of Surrey Hills, 1882-1913", BA Hons thesis, Dept of Geography, University of Melbourne, 1978.
- <sup>98</sup> Council minutes, 13 November 1893.
- <sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, 23 March 1896.
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- <sup>100</sup> McInnes, *Road to Gundagai*, p 129.
- <sup>101</sup> The sewage problems continued well into the twentieth century, and not just along creeks. Council health inspectors constantly found nightsoil dumped on local paddocks and rarely ploughed into the soil to the required depth. See Health Inspector's Reports, D51 INS CLHC.
- <sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, 19 June 1905. The Health Inspector needless to say found such complaints exaggerated.
- <sup>103</sup> McInnes, *Gundagai*, p 92.
- <sup>104</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>105</sup> See for example Health Inspector's Reports, 23 September 1907.
- <sup>106</sup> Council minutes, 8 June 1896.
- <sup>107</sup> Johnston, *My Brother Jack*, p 260.
- <sup>108</sup> Curator's reports, 14 December 1914.
- <sup>109</sup> *Advertiser*, 8 March 1913.
- <sup>110</sup> *Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways, VPP*, 1926, vol 1.
- <sup>111</sup> TB Muir, "Australian plants still survive on Burwood-Alamein railway reserve in Eastern suburbs of Melbourne", "Camberwell Resource Manual, Gould League", 1977. Later reports on the Linear Park indicate a similar surviving pattern.
- <sup>112</sup> Often chosen by the curator, Gordon Barnard.
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■ 6.1 The Camberwell signature, avenue of plane trees, Hopetoun Ave, 1945



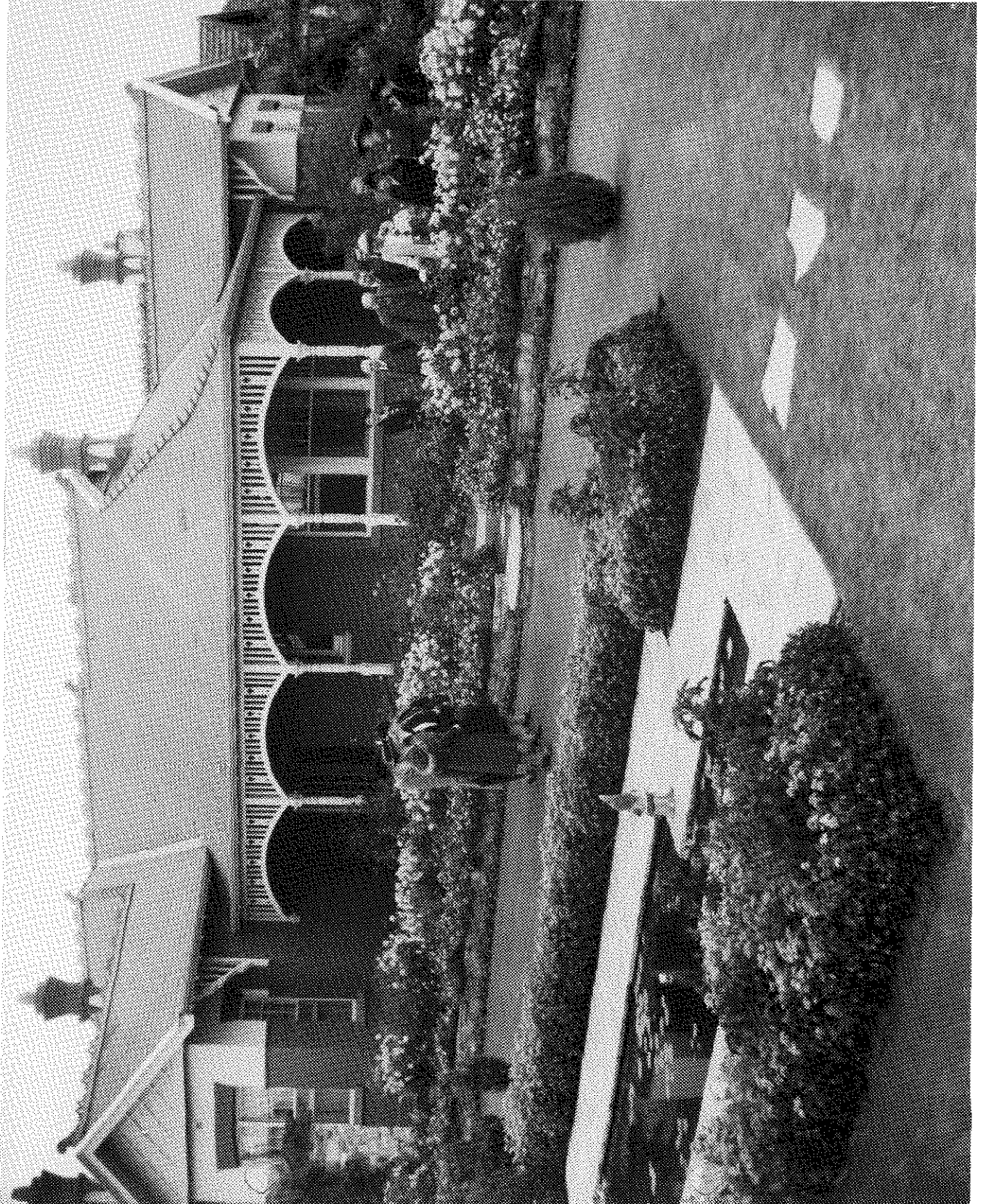
6.2 The removal of elms, Camberwell streets 1945



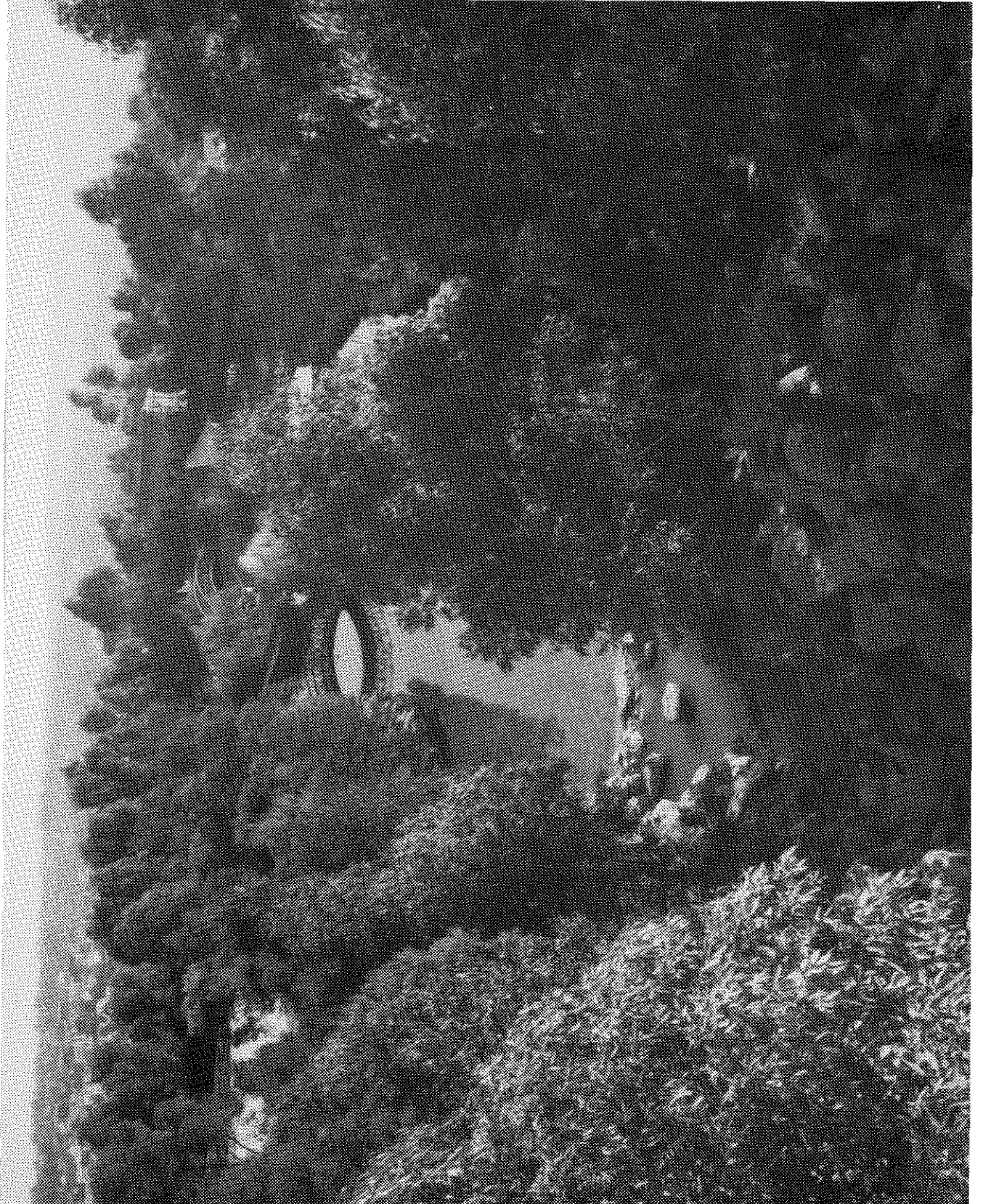
■ 6.3 New street plantings, Palm Grove 1933



6.4 The Camberwell garden: Mrs JC Scott's prize garden, 24 Victoria Rd, Camberwell, *Herald* Garden Competition, 1941



■ 6.5 O Gilpin's private garden Winmalee Road 1939

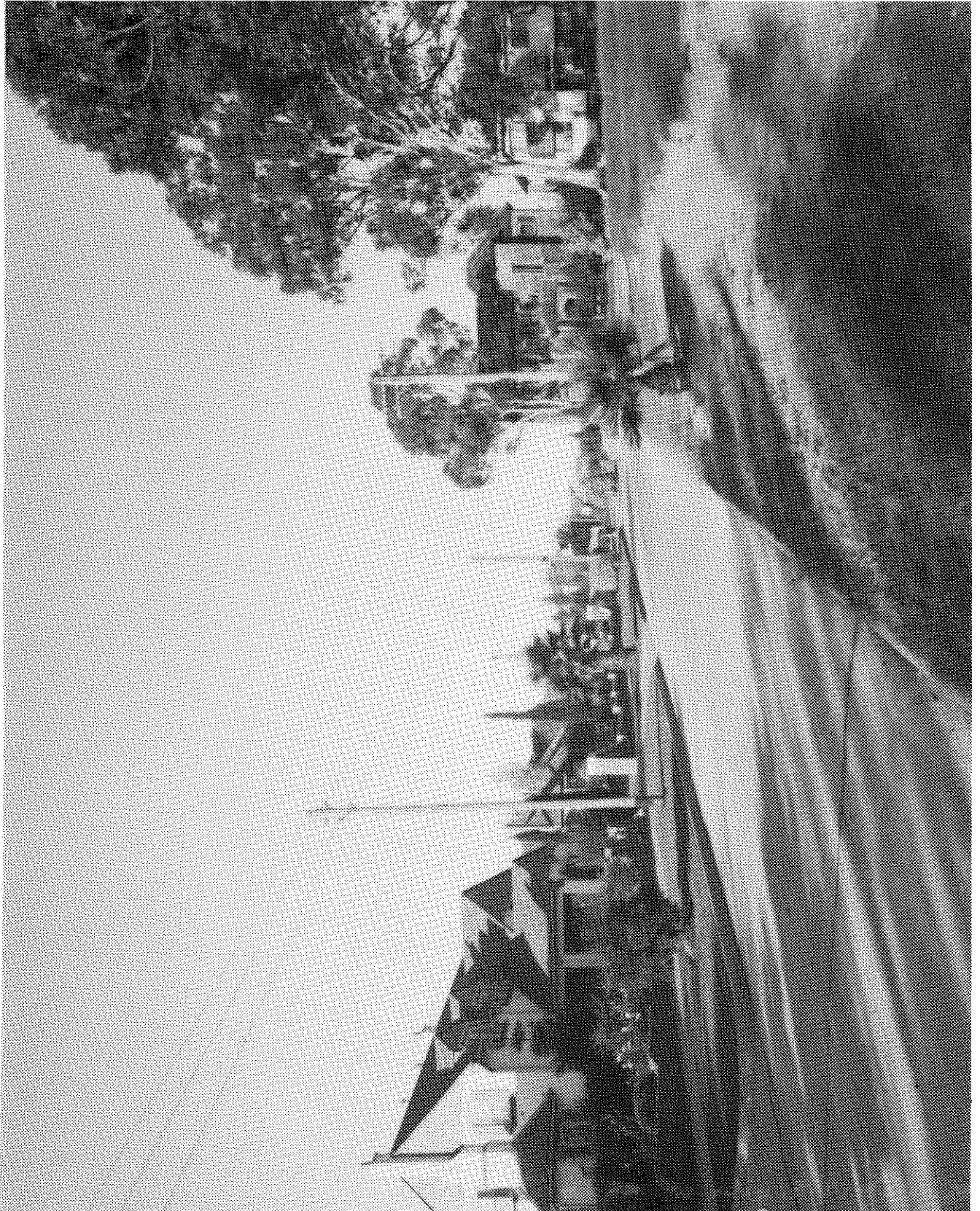




■ 6.6 Beckett Park War Memorial



■ 6.7 New street planting and remnant native vegetation Chatfield Ave 1939



## Chapter Seven

# THE SUBURBAN COMMUNITY

In the portraits of land agents, as in the dreams of their customers, suburbs allowed the family to retreat into a private world.<sup>1</sup> Yet from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, suburbanites joined together in recreational societies, in more formal guilds and associations, in religious congregations and in social and sporting clubs. Local politics and education also left a mark on the present townscape.

### Village life

In pre-suburban Camberwell social life centred on churches and hotels. During the 1860s and 1870s, churches were often served from outside this district. Hotels were often rough and simple affairs but they were familiar landmarks for farmers and travellers.

Near to the Hartwell National School stood the Tyrone Hotel and along most of the main roads of the suburb an hotel or inn became a centre for social gatherings and political meetings. Publicans were the leaders of local society. George Eastaway from the Camberwell Inn for example was on the board of the Hartwell National School. In his Inn he set aside several meeting rooms for local clubs and as well had a skittle alley. The Survey Hotel sponsored a "tolerable programme" of races on Queen's Birthday 1871; Dave Delany sometimes put on foot-racing and "feats of strength" in his hotel yard.<sup>2</sup> Wood-carters held races on New Year's Day around Delany's Hotel in Canterbury Rd.<sup>3</sup>

Even before the 1880s Camberwell boasted several lodges or benefit societies often with headquarters in hotels. The Oddfellows met on Monday nights in the Great Eastern Hotel and the Ancient Order of Foresters met at the Camberwell Inn and Thorncombe Hotel.<sup>4</sup>

Dancing and music also drew farmers and their families together. The Thorncombe Hotel arranged a day's entertainment in 1863 for all "lovers of the old English pastimes"; providing a quadrille dance band as well as a programme of horse racing.<sup>5</sup> A music or social club might hire the Camberwell shire hall for evening entertainments. Julian Herz had formed the Boroondara Choral Society in 1867 and

on the north side of Camberwell Rd the Rev. CS Isaacson sponsored his own meeting room, with a lending library as well as a familiar entertainment (in the cause of temperance); "the penny reading".

Popular music did have its less formal and ordered side. In 1873, five boys came before the Hawthorn Court for carrying on an English village tradition. They were charged by Senior Constable Parkinson with insulting behaviour after "serenading a newly married pair at Camberwell with the rough music of the tin kettle and as it was not agreeable to all parties, the police took notes of those engaged". When the parents of the boys promised to keep them out of mischief all charges were dropped.<sup>6</sup> More proper musical efforts came from outsiders rather than local youth and included a concert to aid the Camberwell school building fund with Mr Crew MLA in the chair, Mr James Vernon at the piano and the vocal talent furnished by a musical society in Abbotsford.<sup>7</sup>

### Suburban pleasures

For much of the nineteenth century, Boroondara farmers got together at church or occasionally for an evening of music in a local hall. Otherwise they met in the local hotels. Infrequent large gatherings might be sponsored by a publican for a special day; Queen's Birthday or New Year's Day for example. The 1880s and the first wave of suburbanites brought a more formal structure to these activities.

The Bowen Estate racecourse, which ran a Camberwell Cup meeting, challenged the hotel race stewards.<sup>8</sup> In 1886 the Bowen Estate hosted a series of races sponsored by the Camberwell Racing Club to which "a large number of people took advantage of the pleasant drive out from Melbourne whilst others availed themselves of the special trains provided at the club's request".<sup>9</sup> The course had a fence and judge's box and was known for its fine panoramic views back to Melbourne, enjoyed on Camberwell Cup Day by six thousand people. Unfortunately so eager were the crowd that at the finish of the Hurdle Race, they rushed the judge's box, pulling down the course fencing and spilling out onto the track.<sup>10</sup>

Subdividers might have noted that *Land Shark* won the last race by "a good three lengths".<sup>11</sup>

The Musical Society of the 1860s was revived in the 1880s, meeting weekly in the shire hall and putting on their first spectacular, an operatta "The Merrie Men of Sherwood" in 1890. In this the performers found that the piano "was not up to orchestral pitch" and the audience had "an excruciating time now and then".<sup>12</sup> The reporter for the local paper concluded that musical nights in Camberwell would be better ignored in the future. Despite his warnings, music continued as a popular pastime. The Boroondara District Band had been formed in 1888 and gave open air performances (in Hawthorn); so confident were they about the future that they launched into an appeal for uniforms.<sup>13</sup> Other musical societies of the 1880s included the Surrey Hills Operatic Club. As well in several parts of Camberwell there were literary societies; in the vanguard of learned life were the Canterbury Literary Society and the Canterbury and Balwyn Glee Club. In 1888 a "minstrel and dramatic club" met in Burns' Tobacconist in Camberwell.<sup>14</sup> The "Combination Variety and Minstrel Company" held a concert in the shire hall, with "comicalities, vocalists and step dancers".<sup>15</sup>

More formal and uplifting was a concert held in the Recreation Hall in Kew where a "fashionable audience" heard an evening of Psalm singing and solo-singing accompanied by trio, piano, flute and cello. Descendants of such bodies survived in Camberwell well into the twentieth century with band recitals and outdoor dancing in the Canterbury and Surrey gardens.<sup>16</sup>

Yet while the proper and fashionable evening entertainments took place in Kew or Hawthorn, Camberwell societies were struggling to maintain members. They did book the shire hall for evening events but these were often more rough and ready than such evenings elsewhere, hence the emphasis on comic songs and glee-club singing. Suburban life brought a more formal structure to entertainment and social life but public performances still had more country roughness than city sophistication.

Along with the buildings of the suburb, communal activities took on a more formal and permanent

character at the end of the boom decade. The Boroondara *Standard* even boasted a music critic and in 1888 Camberwell council hosted a ball and dinner to mark the birthday of the Prince of Wales. One hundred guests responded to the Shire President's invitation and danced the night away in a marquee in his garden. Dancing was "kept up with unflagging zeal till the early hours of the morning".<sup>17</sup>

In the twentieth century, the surviving secular societies of Camberwell were at least able to meet in more substantial buildings. The foundation stone of the town hall was laid in 1890, giving clubs and associations a meeting place, eventually providing a home for the library and with a clock tower visible along the course of Camberwell Rd.<sup>18</sup> On the periphery of Camberwell there were other buildings used for secular entertainment. The Burwood Mechanics Institute for example was built in 1911 and in 1939 a lending library operated from the wooden building.<sup>19</sup> The hall was eventually used as an RSL hall, as was the Athenaeum Hall in Balwyn. This building began life as the Balwyn school and several local church congregations began meeting in the hall.<sup>20</sup> Such buildings, unprepossessing amongst the Victorian mansions and spired churches of Camberwell, are significant nonetheless because of the range of people and associations which depended on them.

### Schools

Children of the suburb shared clear if not uniformly comforting recollections of local schoolrooms. Amongst early schools was the Glen Iris State School (1148).<sup>21</sup> In the north of the suburb, the Balwyn school (1026) was opened in 1868; the school-house of adobe bricks was built by a team of local men headed by JB Maling.<sup>22</sup> Canterbury Model School (3572) opened in 1908, "the crowning result of what has been . . . years of unwearied 'nagging' at the department, and to the residents".<sup>23</sup> The school earned the title "model" because it included "many of the most modern improvements of school architecture all the world over".<sup>24</sup>

Nearly a decade later, the Deepdene School (3680) was opened in 1915 with a new two-storey block of classrooms added in 1922.<sup>25</sup> Other primary schools were added to the new housing estates between the wars. Schools opened during the 1920s were Chatham,

Camberwell South and Ashburton. Another string of schools, many of them begun in temporary classrooms, took in students on the estates of the 1950s; state primary schools appeared in Alamein, Balwyn North, Boroondara (Koonung), Greythorn and Ashburton South (Solway)

The red-brick and later grey "chicken-coop" primary schools were similar to those in other Melbourne suburbs. More distinctive in Camberwell have been the secondary schools, especially the private schools of the municipality. Camberwell High School grew from joint action by several municipalities wanting an eastern suburbs high school. In 1928, Camberwell, Kew and Hawthorn combined to purchase a site for the school. The building wasn't approved until 1939 and took in students in 1941. Canterbury Girls High opened in 1927, Balwyn High in 1954 and Greythorn High in 1958.<sup>26</sup>

Several small private schools were run by individual teachers in Camberwell from time to time. Of the larger schools, Camberwell Grammar School opened in 1885 in "a handsome new brick building, lofty and well ventilated and furnished with the most modern school furniture and effects". Sold in 1891, the school re-opened in 1908 in new premises in Burke Rd. It became a Church of England Public School in 1926 and then expanded into new school buildings in 1935.<sup>27</sup> Marist Brothers purchased "Ardmara" in Canterbury Rd in 1946. This opened as Marcellin College, a Catholic boys' secondary school in 1950.<sup>28</sup>

Camberwell Girls Grammar took in its first pupils (eight in all) in the Kindergarten room of St Mark's Church. After purchasing "Torrington" in 1926 in became a Church of England Girls Grammar School in 1927. Fintona girls' school dates back to before the turn of the century when it began in a house in Hawthorn. After moving into houses in Burke and Victoria Rds it claimed to be the "largest private school in Melbourne" in 1921.<sup>29</sup> Strathcona opened a few years later in a former mansion in Scott St, Canterbury. In 1946 it became the first Baptist Girl's School in Australia.<sup>30</sup>

Camberwell had obvious advantages for proprietors of private colleges. Good public transport brought students from other eastern suburbs; many Camberwell

families had school-age children; most could afford to send children to private schools and parents valued education. The slowness of education department planners in creating a secondary high school in Camberwell gave additional impetus to plans for private school expansion and the estates of some of the large mansions of Camberwell made adequate if far from ideal buildings for teaching.

Camberwell's aging mansions were turned to other institutional uses. The Yooralla School for Crippled Children in Carlton for example purchased "Windsor Lodge" in Balwyn in 1946.<sup>31</sup> The Salvation Army turned "Heathfield" in Brinsley Rd (former home of WL Baillieu) into a home for girls. John O'Shanassy's "Tara" became Broughton Hall, an Anglican hostel for the elderly in 1951 and the Presbyterian Babies Home opened in WJ Craig's "Linda" in Canterbury Rd.<sup>32</sup> St Joseph's Home and School in Surrey Hills had been opened by three Sisters of St Joseph in 1890. The large houses of Camberwell were sometimes turned into private hospitals as well; to the chagrin of local councillors. During the 1920s several boarding houses and nursing homes were suspected of sheltering victims of infectious diseases and councillors often tried to tighten controls over their activities.<sup>33</sup>

### Empire loyalists

One of the most popular annual events in Camberwell were Empire Day celebrations in Surrey Hills. Combined with Empire Night bonfires at One Tree Hill (Beckett Park) these sustained the Anglophile ardour of Camberwell adults. Young boys and later girls were introduced to the glories of empire through the Boy Scout movement.

Open countryside in and around Camberwell inspired a series of local scout groups before 1914. Camberwell's "Melba's Own" group was one of the pioneer scout bodies in Melbourne, formed by boys without adult guidance. Students from Camberwell Grammar School met on street corners and read the latest copies of "Scouting for Boys" in 1907. When they finally convinced one young man to become their leader they formed their "Melba's Own" troop.<sup>34</sup> The scout movement quickly embraced girls and boys in the suburb. The wooded parklands of which Camberwell was so proud made a perfect site for scout halls. Nestled in amongst English trees, the simple iron

and timber halls introduced Camberwell youth to the rites of the scout movement, from knot-making to empire loyalty. In 1924, the "Lady Best's Own" troop in Canterbury opened their new hall. This was the fifteenth scout hall in Victoria and its opening marked "another epoch in the scout movement in Victoria".<sup>35</sup>

The proud suburb of the 1890s and beyond sanctioned other loyalist entertainments, including a volunteer corps, military bands and Empire Day celebrations in local gardens. The Boer War gave a boost to these quasi-military recreations. Surrey Hills formed its own brass band and several clubs set up miniature shooting galleries. In 1911 the bands were permitted to give Sunday afternoon performances in local gardens.

### Sport

As in all budding suburbs, sporting clubs found almost immediate support in Camberwell though their existence may have been more precarious than elsewhere. The church-based sporting clubs probably enjoyed more success than secular clubs and several churches in Camberwell sponsored tennis clubs between the wars.

In 1874 Camberwell Cricket Club had begun to play on the Town Hall Reserve. The Camberwell Football Club began using the reserve in 1886. In 1909 the cricketers and in 1910 the football club moved to the present Camberwell Cricket Ground (first let for sport in 1903).

During the 1920s, both clubs badgered the council to improve the playing surface and surrounds of the ground, especially when the football club was admitted into the VFA in 1926. A press box, new turnstile gates and improvements to other parts of the reserve were carried out to mark the elevation of Camberwell to one of the lower rungs of Victoria's second-string football competition. Permissive occupancy of ground in the original reserve for bowling and tennis clubs caused problems for the council. During the twentieth century, bowling greens, tennis courts and pavilions appeared in other recreation reserves in Camberwell. The other sporting site of some local pride was the Camberwell Baths, formed in 1926 in Riversdale Park. Up until then popular swimming places had been

the clayholes filled with water, most popular of all Surrey Dive. Graham McInnes recalled arriving at the dive from Hurstbridge. His journey in "jolting, jouncing heat brought us to the lip of an enormous abandoned quarry filled almost to the rim with translucent, greenish water".<sup>36</sup> The new pool may not have held the same fascination, but it was lined with expensive tiling, it hosted Herald Learn-to-Swim Campaigns and councillors could occasionally congratulate Camberwell swimmers who made it to victory in state championships.<sup>37</sup>

### Churches

Sport, mutual improvement societies and literary clubs often drew their strength from local churches and in any account of suburban social activities, churches were responsible for generating social networks beyond the home. Especially in Camberwell.

Camberwell was one of the suburbs which made up Melbourne's "Bible Belt". In this comfortable arc from Brighton to Box Hill, church attendances (especially amongst the Non-Conformist denominations) were consistently high from the 1880s onwards. Graeme Davison noted that in 1891, Camberwell had the highest ratio of Anglican attendances after St. Kilda and Kew. Camberwell Presbyterians were more likely to be found in church on Sundays than were coreligionists from any suburb, other than St. Kilda and the neighbouring Caulfield.<sup>38</sup> Camberwell always had a relatively high membership in non-Conformist churches.

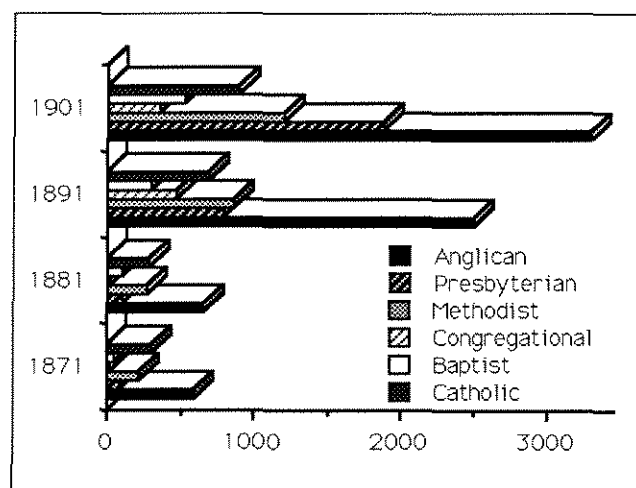


Fig 7.1 Religions in Camberwell 1871-1901  
Source: *Census of Victoria 1871-1901*

Church spires still rise above the soft greens of trees and dull reds of Camberwell rooftops. Many churches are now landmark buildings. When St. John's Anglican Church in Burke Rd was completed in 1924, it was hailed as one of the largest in the suburban area. Not only that, but it rose to the "great height of 150 feet".<sup>39</sup> As Archbishop Harrington Lees told the one thousand residents who braved a cold Spring day to attend the opening:

*the work of erecting and completing beautiful and commodious churches was to be recommended and encouraged . . . small and mean places of worship should not suffice when imposing and beautiful churches were possible . . . we should not be satisfied with less for our places of worship than for ourselves. Fine churches created a psychology and fostered a spirituality amongst the people.*<sup>40</sup>

New congregations were formed at the end of the suburban expansion of the 1880s. Often different denominations aided each other in finding places for worship and in supporting building funds. In Burwood for example, the first Anglican services were held in the Primitive Methodist chapel in Norwood Rd until St Faith's church was completed in 1892.<sup>41</sup>

Roman Catholics in Camberwell were initially attached to a parish which extended from Burke Rd to Nunawading.<sup>42</sup> When Jesuit clergy opened a parish church in the 1890s it was as an extension of their parish in Richmond and Hawthorn.<sup>43</sup> Plans were drawn up early in the twentieth century for a church which would tower over the Camberwell Junction. The site, as the *Advocate* pointed out was "magnificently situated on one of the most prominent points of one of the most picturesque and prosperous suburbs".<sup>44</sup> Once completed in 1918, Our Lady of Victories became a familiar landmark standing out above the busy Camberwell Junction.

All denominations created later congregations in new subdivisions. Their buildings generally followed in the wake of suburban expansion. So for example, the Malvern Circuit of the Methodist church purchased land at Ashburton, in 1928 within a few years of the electrification of the Outer Circle spur line. A church hall was built in 1935 and then as post-

war housing spread through Ashburton, the church hall was expanded in 1950 and a Sunday school added in 1952. St Aidan's Presbyterian church North Balwyn was another product of post-war expansion, with a multi-purpose church-hall opened in 1953.<sup>45</sup>

These church buildings reflect the styles of the times. Though they are rarely as imposing as the parish churches near the Junction, they do bring distinctive environmental qualities to suburban estates. One recognisable group of churches dates from the 1920s and another body from the 1950s and later. Most seemed to have their greatest strength in attendance and in formal parish societies within a decade of completion. St Dunstan's history seems typical. The Anglican Church purchased "a wind-swept paddock of wet onion grass" in Wattle Valley Road in 1925 near to a "hopeful cluster of red roofs".<sup>46</sup> The building was dedicated in 1930 and attendances peaked in the 1930s with baptisms following the trend of attendances. Clubs and societies attached to the church were formed in the same period but declined afterwards and the church was not completed until 1967 and the debt cleared in the 1970s.<sup>47</sup>

The spires of Camberwell's Protestant churches hint at English provincial life. Catholic churches on the other hand are generally heavier in tone, built of stone with striking towers or domes. Other religious groups saw their real mission amongst those on the fringes of home-owning Camberwell and their buildings are far more self-effacing. The Salvation Army were quick to respond to the Housing Commission Estate in Ashburton and moved a temporary hall to High St in 1951.<sup>48</sup> An older Army building survived in Canterbury.

Church sport and social life remained stronger in Camberwell than did purely secular societies. The South Suburban Churches sporting competitions flourished where other groups (Camberwell's VFA football team) struggled. Attendance figures have remained high in Camberwell but occasionally parish debts grew and active participants became discouraged. The first pastor appointed in 1897 to the Canterbury Congregational Church thought of moving his parish because of "the overchurching of the district". He moved the congregation to a new address in 1902.<sup>49</sup>

The Protestant churches stamped their influence not only on social life but also on the uses of public open space. During the 1930s, Methodist clergymen convinced council to close several parks on Sundays and after the Second World War a referendum banning all Sunday sport was carried.

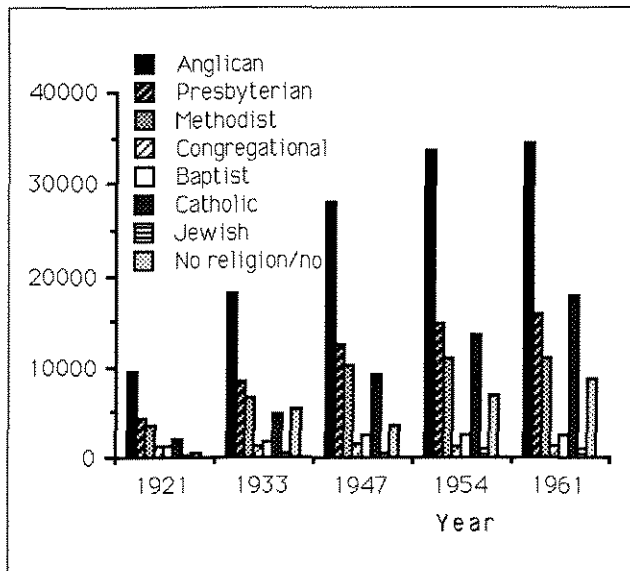


Fig 7.2 Camberwell religions 1921-1961  
Source: *Census of Australia 1921-61*

Campaigns against Sunday sport reflected the continuing strength of Non-Conformist churches in Camberwell. All churches have secured strong followings but in the twentieth century, in Camberwell as elsewhere, a noticeable minority described themselves as members of no churches. The twentieth century brought secular attractions to rival the ties of the parish; even in Camberwell.

### The cinema

Even after banishing evils as pernicious as Sunday football, church-going Camberwell had to confront another threat. The bright lights of the suburban cinema shone out over more and more Camberwell shopping centres. In Camberwell itself the "Rivoli" and the "Broadway" vied for custom. In Balwyn the local cinema survived long after the arrival of television. In Ashburton the piercing blue glow of the "Civic" theatre's logo shone as far as the border with Malvern. The curving streamlines of the "Regal" brought the stars of Hollywood to Hartwell.

Opened in 1937, and designed by H Vivian Taylor, Soilleux and Overend, the "Regal" boasted a roof garden where patrons might marvel at different stars and a soundproof baby's "crying room". The manager, Robert McLeish, announced the opening with "a distinct sense of pride, and complete confidence in the future . . . this is the golden age of cinema."<sup>50</sup>

The passion and romance of stars on giant screens shocked some church figures. But at the same time the cinema gave a meeting place to local people. One of the most energetic local leaders, Henry Holland was also a cinema proprietor and his cinema nights raised money for Camberwell scout groups and sports clubs.

These films seemed less threatening by the 1950s when the fading glories of the inter-war picture palaces were familiar elements in the suburban streetscape. In 1956, as Melbourne hosted the Olympic Games, crowds of Camberwell people stood in the streets in front of radio stores, watching Australian sports stars on television. The cinema's days were numbered and now only the Balwyn cinema survives within the boundaries of Camberwell. Nevertheless for at least one generation of Camberwell people, the movies, their stars and styles brought the wide world into the narrowest of suburban lives.

### Progress Associations

Religion and its associated social identities played a central role in the character and appearance of Camberwell. During the twentieth century another strong local movement helped shape the character of the suburb. The politics of Camberwell was largely directed by local progress associations. Each corner of Camberwell had spawned a Progress Association by the 1920s (Surrey Hills by the turn of the century) each one determined to obtain the fair share of services for their street, shopping strip or subdivision.

At first they restricted themselves to demands for street maintenance or more parks and gardens. Gradually they extended their influence demanding halls and more importantly, Infant Welfare Centres. The South Camberwell Progress Association pleaded for an infant welfare centre and so did the Balwyn Association. These centres soon became familiar places for Camberwell women thought they operated



out of a succession of buildings. Yet hardly had a new subdivision been completed than a Progress Association appeared to demand an Infant Welfare Centre. Often the Association was able to raise money on the estate and so begin a building fund. In Surrey Hills the Progress Association offered a Baby Health Building free of charge to council. In response, Councillor Reid remarked that he did "not think the council has ever had a more generous offer"<sup>51</sup>

In South Camberwell the progress Association raised money through evening entertainments such as the meeting in St Mary's hall, corner of Bowen St and Toorak Rds, where Tom Tregallas recounted his experiences "Amongst the Lyrebirds".<sup>52</sup>

Local jealousies occasionally distorted progress association politics. During the creation of the Golf Links Estate, local progress associations demanded the council not spend too much money in making it a showpiece and asked that funds be kept aside for the older parts of the municipality. Principal amongst the opponents of the Estate were the Balwyn Progress Association who seemed to hold a powerful sway over council in the 1920s.

These societies and clubs could not transform Camberwell into a familiar communal world. Suburbs, despite their range of formal societies, have always remained family-centred. Amongst secular societies, perhaps the sporting clubs have made the more enduring mark on the suburban landscape. Parks, tennis courts and bowling clubs are elements familiar to all residents even if they do not ever bowl a ball or swing a racquet.

### Prohibition

The hotel which gave its name to Camberwell has gone. The religious strength of the suburb sustained temperance guilds before the First World War; amongst them the Women's Christian Temperance Union who hosted a Dry Reception for sailors from the visiting American fleet in 1908 (no doubt something of a shock to the sailors coming ashore from Dry ships)! Camberwell emerged from the 1920 referendum on local option as a dry area, when only 40 per cent of Victorians voted against liquor licenses, 64 per cent of Camberwell voters wanted no hotels. The eleven hotels and three wine

and spirits stores in Camberwell and Box Hill closed and the licensees took their compensation and left Camberwell.

Behind them, the buildings which once stood at the heart of social life crumbled. An underwear factory replaced the Surrey hotel; other hotel buildings were used as guest houses. The Tyrone became a wood-turning factory. In 1932 it fell foul of the South Camberwell Progress Association who portrayed it as an eyesore in the heart of their bright new shopping centre. The building inspector reported to council that "in one room daylight can be seen through a large hole in the roof . . . and the premises is unsewered".<sup>53</sup> The Tyrone along with other former hotels was pulled down. Today Malone's Canterbury Club Hotel stands as a monument to the central place of hotels in nineteenth-century life and to the distinctive strength of temperance in Camberwell.

### Summary

Temperance movements, along with local progress associations drew people together in Camberwell; their aim in the long run was to protect the calm and absence of street life in the suburb; a drive extended in the 1930s when parks and sports fields were closed on Sundays. Spires rise above the green of trees, several generations of schools are spread through Camberwell and the Infant Welfare Centres and parks are the result of the drive of progress associations. The sports pavilions also are the product of local community efforts. The landscape of Camberwell has fewer buildings devoted to recreational activity than other parts of Melbourne. Nevertheless those which do exist are important reminders of the several recreational networks which have always been a part of suburban life.

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- 1 See Davison, *Marvellous Melbourne*, pp 146-147.
- 2 *Standard*, 26 May 1871.
- 3 Blainey, *Camberwell*, pp 26-27.
- 4 *Ibid*, p 29.
- 5 *Standard*, 3 April 1863.
- 6 *Ibid*, 14 February 1873.
- 7 *Ibid*, 25 June 1869.
- 8 *Standard*, 4 June 1886. A second race track, the Sherwood Park Racecourse, was on open land near the Boundary Rd and Bath Rd intersection.
- 9 *Ibid*, 4 June 1886.
- 10 *Ibid*.
- 11 *Ibid*.
- 12 *Ibid*, 18 April 1890.
- 13 *Ibid*, 17 February 1888.
- 14 *Ibid*, 27 April 1888.
- 15 *Advertiser*, 28 September 1888.
- 16 Council minutes, various dates.
- 17 *Standard*, 16 November 1888.
- 18 On the library see, G Blainey, *A history of Camberwell*, Camberwell 1980, pp 114-5.
- 19 "Burwood bulletin: a community newsletter", no 9, June 1983.
- 20 "Balwyn state school, 1868-1968", 1968, pp 5-6.
- 21 Education Department of Victoria, *Vision and realisation: a centenary history of state education in Victoria*, Melbourne 1973.
- 22 *Ibid*.
- 23 *Advertiser*, 27 June 1908.
- 24 *Ibid*.
- 25 *Vision and realisation*, p 429.
- 26 *Ibid*, pp 466-7, p 562, p 542-3, pp 550-1.
- 27 *Free press*, 13 December 1934.
- 28 Br Alban Doyle, *Marist Brothers in Australia, 1872-1972*, Sydney 1972, p 606.
- 29 BJ Chilvers, *The history of Fintona*, Melbourne 1946.
- 30 JM Fendley, *A school on a hill*, South Yarra 1986.
- 31 N Marshall, *The Yooralla story*, Melbourne 1978, p 85.
- 32 C Kellaway, Research report on "Linda" Presbyterian Babies Home (National Trust Report) held in CLHC.
- 33 See Council minutes,
- 34 CH Roche "The saga of Melba's own: the story of Camberwell Central (Melba's Own) scout group 1908-1968", Camberwell 1974.
- 35 *Camberwell Citizen*, 15 March 1924.
- 36 McInnes, *Road to Gundagai*, p 163.
- 37 Council minutes, various dates.
- 38 Davison, *Marvellous Melbourne*, table 19, p 208.
- 39 *Citizen*, 1 March 1924.
- 40 *Ibid*, 1 March 1924.
- 41 "Burwood bulletin", no 35, Nov/Dec 1989, and information from Jean Worland, Burwood history group.
- 42 See Mary Sheehan, *Victories in Camberwell: a history of Catholics in Camberwell*, Pakenham 1989.
- 43 *Ibid*, p 16.
- 44 As quoted in *Ibid*, p 39.
- 45 FL Edyvean, "Ashburton Methodist Church", 1977 and K Cox, "A church is built: St Aidan's North Balwyn", 1971.
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- <sup>46</sup> KW Bennett, *Fifty years at St Dunstan's: a history of the parish of St Dunstan, Camberwell, 1926-1976*, Camberwell 1976, p 1.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>48</sup> F Martin "Camberwell corps 1910-70" CLHC.
- <sup>49</sup> AG Gunson, "A brief history of the Canterbury Congregational church", 1974, p 10.
- <sup>50</sup> "Regal souvenir programme" quoted in "Burwood Bulletin", 31 November/December 1988.
- <sup>51</sup> *Argus*, 8 October 1929.
- <sup>52</sup> *Argus*, 6 February 1924.
- <sup>53</sup> Council minutes, 18 April 1932.
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■ 9.1 Suburban landmarks, 1939 Our Lady of Victories and Camberwell Gardens



## Chapter Eight

# IMAGES OF CAMBERWELL

In the memories of local people, Camberwell has a character different from that presented in histories of its buildings and gardens. Mrs Buchanan, an elderly granddaughter of one of Balwyn's pioneer families, born in 1890, raised on a dairy farm in Balwyn, and a housewife and mother in Camberwell, when asked to comment on Geoffrey Blainey's *A History of Camberwell*, declared "I don't remember it like that", and neither did "Dad" her husband. Blainey focussed on the broader politics and social history of Camberwell as a whole, Mrs Buchanan on intimate fragments recollected from the Balwyn of her youth.<sup>1</sup>

From local festivals, the activities of historical societies and from anecdotes of local life, we can piece together some fragmentary images of Camberwell. In preceding chapters, our environmental history dwelled on the mechanical processes shaping the present townscape. This chapter draws together personal and impressionistic responses to Camberwell. These are not presented as an objective survey of resident opinion. Rather, this is a sample of the varied perspectives through which residents view their own suburb; it places special emphasis on local images of Camberwell's history and environment.

### A shady place

James Smith's *Historical Sketch of Victoria*, written as a guide to the immigrant from Britain made no reference to Camberwell except to describe the Yarra Valley as "spread out between a succession of undulating hills, with a fine mountain chain in the distance [which] will remind the visitor from England of the famed prospect from Richmond Hill in Surrey".<sup>2</sup> This favourable comparison with a well-loved landscape of Home, coloured local perceptions of the Surrey Hills area at the time of its subdivision, and for many decades afterwards. Alexander Sutherland's 1888 view from Hawthorn was of the "more distant Camberwell - a wide extent of gardens and orchards" together with "one fine stretch of woodland".<sup>3</sup> This green and shady image, reinforced by the accepted meaning of the original name (Boroondara: "where the ground is thickly shaded") persisted and not without justification.<sup>4</sup>

Local clans of the indigenous Kulin people had all but disappeared from the area by the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> So too had most of the native flora and fauna. Naturalist and nature writer, Charles Barrett, grew up in suburban Hawthorn in the 1890s, but "with nature in his backyard" - in sparsely populated Camberwell and country beyond.<sup>6</sup> A century later, following the relentless advance of suburbia, remnants of naturally-seeded flora are so rare in the municipality that they are included as historical relics in the itineraries of "history walks" conducted by local history groups along the route of the short-lived Outer Circle railway.<sup>7</sup> The Council did preserve an "ancient and majestic-looking gum" on municipal land adjacent to the Town Hall.<sup>8</sup> With the recent enthusiasm for private "native gardens" some native birds have returned to the area. Camberwell, although not described in this fashion in local histories and recently solicited perceptions, is composed almost entirely of introduced species - a dense and complex mixture of human-built social fabric and exotic plantings established by immigrant people and their descendants. Popular images exaggerate the survival of a pre-European arcadia in Camberwell.

### Wild life in suburbia

While local perceptions draw on natural Camberwell, more mordant images stress the uniformity and unimaginativeness of the suburb. As indicated earlier in this history, George Johnston painted one Camberwell estate as a mental desert; the pretensions of its design matched by those of its inhabitants' lives. By the 1960s, homegrown comedian and social satirist, Barry Humphries, an uncommon product of suburbia, wrote about the "spotlessly clean stamping ground" of his childhood ". . . hideous heartbreaking Camberwell . . . a semi-posh Melbourne suburb". Growing up in Camberwell he found "excruciatingly boring". Regardless of his biting caricatures of the "nice people" inhabiting the monotonous, conformist brick boxes of his childhood, an older Barry wishes to save his "beloved suburb of Camberwell", or at least "the Junction" from the developer's onslaught.<sup>9</sup> In poetic testimonial to the suburb of his youth Barry Humphries lamented:

. . . *Camberwell! Your parks, your shops  
War Savings Streets and tramway stops;  
your famous Junction with its web  
Of wires above; below the ebb  
And flow of busy shopping mothers;* <sup>10</sup>

Most Camberwellians have been slower to poke fun at their home territory and its inhabitants, although some of its citizens recently supported Theatreworks in staging an irreverent spoof of the City's history; *Days of Empire and Sly Grog: celebrating Whistlers, Teetotallers, and Gentry from Camberwell Past and Present*.<sup>11</sup> In fact the older more prosperous districts of the municipality took themselves very seriously on the whole and still do. The *Age* took them seriously too, when admiring "leafy Camberwell's" appreciating property values in the hungry late-1920s. An *Age* reporter marvelled at "such astounding progress, springing from a purely residential character [which] bespeaks the healthiness and pleasantness of this handsome city".<sup>12</sup> Two years later, as the Depression worsened, the more conservative *Argus* castigated Camberwell's:

*extravagance . . . valiantly borrowing, lavishly spending . . . 'civic pride' finds expression in concrete roads with galvanised iron treeguards and superfluous but ornate concrete electric light standards which proclaim unjustifiable preference over older settled areas which warrant development.*<sup>13</sup>

The city council responded in 1932. Their "Camberwell and District Prosperity Week; Twelve Square Miles of Sunny Smiles" with a parade and other entertainments along the lines of the then defunct Surrey Hills Empire Day celebrations supposedly justified lavish spending. Promoted as an attempt "to reduce unemployment in the area", it was also calculated to increase the profits of local traders and succeeded in doing so so.<sup>14</sup>

Such celebrations were designed to portray a strong sense of local identity; one far more positive than the "excruciatingly boring" suburbia of the satirist. Camberwell's sunny smiles were not supposed to be liquor-induced and long suburban streets, unrelieved by an hotel's beckoning light, set the seal on Camberwell's respectability after 1920. Defended stoutly at local option polls and often proclaimed

as essential to the character of the suburb, dryness had an underside. Private tipping, from the cocktail cupboard, the whisky and sherry decanter and from the beer bottle continued, if the regular collection of empties made by the bottle-ho and dustman are any guide.<sup>15</sup> A "dry" area it may have been declared in 1920 but its residents consumed their share of alcohol as bar staff to the west of Burke Rd could testify.<sup>16</sup> And is it coincidence that with ten pm closing, the Southern Hemisphere's biggest beer sales were recorded just beyond the suburb's south-eastern frontier, at the Matthew Flinders Hotel? Dryness still crowns the identity of Camberwell. It gives the critic a convenient target and the residents a reassurance that despite other changes, the suburb is still a place apart from the rest of the nation.

Even amongst the many residents who share largely positive images, there remain subtle differences. Each part of the municipality has its own sense of history and townscape as the following survey reveals.

### Balwyn

Mrs Buchanan remembered Balwyn as a farming district and a pretty picnic spot for city folk rather than as a new suburb at the turn of the century. In the 1930s, it was also one of the City's neglected "older settled areas". A decade later, local historian Donald McLean saw it as a "placid and happy" sort of place which had experienced "steady development undisturbed by the great civic struggles and unmarked by great personalities". He concluded that it was only at the close of its first century of settlement that Balwyn had "caught up with all those achievements of civilisation which can be classed as social amenities and this development entailed a corresponding alteration of land values".<sup>17</sup>

### Burwood

In the 1880s, Burwood was presented to homebuyers as having an "English village environment" complete with a scattering of "lordly mansions".<sup>18</sup> As late as 1933 there were still several farms in the area. William Aisbett for example was a fish, poultry and bird breeder and flower seller on eight acres of land with a 500 ft frontage to Toorak Rd. That year he successfully sued Camberwell City Council for negligent damage to his fish ponds.<sup>19</sup> For the most

part Burwood retained a quiet, moderately prosperous, but reserved style. This is reflected in the Burwood History Group's interest in the small farmers, orchardists and floriculturists, the ordinary folk rather than the leading figures in the suburb's pre-urban past.<sup>20</sup> Burwood rediscovers a more egalitarian past than the history presented by groups in Canterbury and Camberwell.

### Alamein

Almost entirely enclosed by two major roads, a railway line and a creek valley, the Alamein Housing Commission Estate has always seemed a place apart from the rest of Camberwell. Even in the encircling suburb of Ashburton it had a separate identity. High St, formed something of *cordon sanitaire* for the alert house-buyer. To be south of the line was to stray onto the wrong side of the tracks, insofar as that could be said of anywhere in Camberwell.

The tenants of Alamein's public housing estate have developed their own sense of community, assisted by welfare workers and more recently by Malcolm Shore, the Ministry of Housing and Construction's first "tenant worker". Understandably their more formally-constituted unity has developed from efforts to survive rather than from a sense of belonging to, or putting down roots in their part of the municipality. The first tenants may have had a sharper sense of identity with their area and each other. But, as the distinction between "Commission" and other houses becomes blurred, the sense of a dividing line along High St weakens.<sup>21</sup>

The first Commission tenants took a perverse pride in their distinctive precinct; theirs was a fragment of the inner city dropped by bureaucratic *fiat* into the comfortable eastern suburbs. In fact long-term residents of the Alamein Estate can recall considerable unease about their place in the municipality. Many look back on struggles to obtain better recreational areas around the estate (the Ashburton Swimming Pool was for many, the first real sign of municipal commitment to Alamein). For some, Oakleigh and the factories along the Dandenong railway line had more importance than Camberwell. Once Chadstone shopping centre opened they had little interest in the Junction. Local comparisons were always drawn

with the neighbouring Jordanville Estate (over the border from Camberwell) rather than with other Camberwell localities.<sup>22</sup> Some recalled that they felt a part of Camberwell only by accident; unwanted by local landowners and administrators. And for a sense of local history, some would turn to their childhoods in Prahran or Richmond rather than to their adult life in Camberwell.

Housing Commission tenants had little of the material security and social status of residents in Camberwell's more settled and affluent districts. Not surprisingly, those who are not ratepayers see the state government as the major authority with whom they must deal and not their municipal council. This too colours their sense of history and place. Many of the ministry houses are now owner-occupied, however some by residents of forty years or so. The once almost belligerent pride of Estate tenants is no longer significant. Since the estate now combines owners as well as tenants and as plantings and house renovations make it less visually distinctive, memories of a brief local life dissolve. Responses to what was in the first instance, a creation of state planners, are now more muted than in other corners of Camberwell.

### Surrey Hills

In 1906, Surrey Hills first celebrated Empire Day. A quasi-religious fervour placed Surrey Hills at the more conservative, Anglophile extreme of post-Federation patriotism. Surrey Hills also portrayed itself as "the home of the rose" that most imperial of flowers.<sup>23</sup> Seventy-one years later a threat to their community in the form of "a proposal to build a major road/railway overpass through the Union Road Shopping Centre" united the people of Surrey Hills. They first of all opposed the proposal, but also revived local celebrations. Now, an annual Surrey Hills Day draws residents together in a public celebration of the history of the area. It is moreover a sign of wider concern about the past and its special qualities, generated in the face of a potentially destructive road development.

The depiction of the suburb which most stands out in a recent publication of the Surrey Hill's History Nook is that it is a "community".<sup>24</sup> This "community consciousness"<sup>25</sup> is the quality most often referred

to by those interviewed before the parade on Surrey Hills Day, 25 November 1989.<sup>26</sup>

Long-term residents stressed that the area had undergone significant transformation particularly in recent years. As the local population aged, properties came onto the market in increased numbers. The change most commented upon was the rate at which "younger people with money came in".

Older Surrey Hills folk are divided in their view of the new generation of home-buyers. In the eyes of Lesly Jefferies, now living in Camberwell, "the young families are great. They brought it back to life There's something different about Surrey Hills . . . a slightly slower pace, which people welcome". Libby Cavanagh, a resident of just twelve months, believes that one of the social mechanisms which makes Surrey Hills such a noticeably "close-knit, friendly" place is the "street party". New neighbours in Wandsworth Rd "made us feel very welcome" and invited the family to a "party for Melbourne Cup Day [and] in December a Christmas Party when Santa came with presents for the children - about forty of them". The residents of Croydon and Guilford Rds amongst others, also enjoy this form of socially cohesive activity. The Glascodine sisters also noted that those much older institutions, "the churches are now very active with many young families attending. Little St George's is overflowing at the door, every Sunday".

### Canterbury

Residents recollect the historical importance of Canterbury in its settlement by "gentlemen farmers" and its rise to refined upper-middle class suburbanism.<sup>27</sup> It had no shopping centre to speak of until the twentieth century.

Jan Pigot remarked on "the great visual changes" which have taken place in Canterbury. Maling Rd for example was transformed from "a quiet residential shopping centre to a tourist precinct by the end of the 1970s". Furthermore, with new waves of "people moving into the area, little workmen's weatherboard cottages become almost palatial overnight - become overdone. Its sad it changes the atmosphere . . . some [newcomers] don't stay very long [they simply renovate] and sell".

### Camberwell

According to a survey published in the *Age* in 1936, Camberwell was considered a "middle" suburb compared with the rest of Melbourne, not merely geographically, but in material and social character.<sup>28</sup> Not quite on a par with Toorak, Camberwell rated red-brick streets ahead of the great swathes of petty-bourgeois flatlands. Camberwell's reputation as a conservative enclave "a comfortable middle class suburb with a puritanical streak" is legend.<sup>29</sup> Almost from the outset it offered "respectability", an intangible quality craved by the ambitious in the inner city and defended valiantly by those in Camberwell. McCalman tells of the determined Thomas Beauchamp, apprenticed as a boy to the light engineering trade and who "by the time he was thirty had moved out of Richmond forever and built a home in picturesque Camberwell".<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, one Camberwell SP bookmaker with a turnover of £80000 in 1958 feared (as did others in his line of business) the shame of detection and imprisonment.<sup>31</sup>

In 1980 along with Coburg, Knox and Waverley, Camberwell was openly criticised in an MMBW report for its failure to provide variety in its domestic dwellings, "a range of detached houses, flats and terrace houses . . . to accord with the changing character of domestic households". In other words the municipality was judged to be uniformly and stubbornly middling middle-class. Such criticisms have done little to shake the the self-esteem of Camberwell people.

Central Camberwell is both a thriving commercial centre and a popular residential area. Camberwell people are acutely aware of the jarring visual character of much recent building. Within the older localities around Camberwell, Surrey Hills and Canterbury many want to defend "outstanding amenity".<sup>32</sup> In Camberwell itself, threats are magnified, the closer one comes to the Junction. But even away from the commercial hub, dual occupancy, the rate of building demolition and exotic new styles disturb familiar streetscapes.

Struggles to defend local heritage are disturbing the calmness of Camberwell. Residents respond to threats to the comfortable family-oriented life of their suburb. They do so by turning to the historical qualities embodied in buildings and streetscapes. In the struggle



to control change, an often unstated sense of historical identity plays a central role.

### Summary

Over the years, Camberwell folks shared a clear image of their "stamping ground". Neither the barbs of a home-grown satirist [Humphries], nor the critiques of professional outsiders have daunted Camberwell. Subtle changes in perspective alter the responses of residents in various parts of the suburb.

This chapter has drawn on perceptions which Camberwell residents hold of local history and their environment. It has been constructed from casual interviews and documentary evidence. For those living on the more recently-settled northern and southern outskirts of Camberwell, perceptions of the environment and its history are low-keyed or "placid" as Maclean said of Balwyn. In the central corridor, in contrast, residents hold firm self-images. These quite often reflect conservative values; a belief in respectability is evident but not strongly articulated. "The sentimental cult of Home", of enduring ties with England and reverence for the suburban home are alive and well. Attitudes to demolition and rebuilding have split Camberwell proper. A conservative faith in "community" has been revived and re-vitalised in Surrey Hills and Canterbury. The most recent incursions of young homemakers is generally seen as a mixed blessing by older residents. For the newcomers on the other hand, the older districts of Camberwell offer a stable, cohesive and attractive environment. A perfect place for family life, with some sense of community and identity.

In protecting the family and linking each family to a wider community, residents must rise to defend their material environment beyond the home. Houses, from humble cottages to inter-war bungalows, are nostalgically revered. In addition, Camberwell's public and private gardens, streetscapes and shopping centres all find impassioned defenders. These symbolise all the other advantages which distinguish Camberwell from both suburbs to the west of Melbourne and post-war estates to the east. Camberwell folk will no doubt turn more and more to history in staving off looming threats to their middling, respectable suburb.

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- <sup>1</sup> Transcript of interview, 21 July 1965, p 6 Camberwell Local History Collection.
- <sup>2</sup> Facsimile edition, Sydney 1974.
- <sup>3</sup> *Victoria and its Metropolis*, vol 1, p 569.
- <sup>4</sup> G McWilliams in *Camberwell City News*, April 1988, vol 3, no 2, p 7.
- <sup>5</sup> Mrs Buchanan, 21 July 1965, pp 5-6 and G Presland, *The Land of the Kulin: discovering the lost landscape and the first people of Port Phillip*, Ringwood 1985, pp 20-24.
- <sup>6</sup> T Griffiths, " 'The natural history of Melbourne': the culture of nature writing in Victoria, 1880-1945", *Australian Historical Studies*, vol 23 no 93 October 1989, p 346.
- <sup>7</sup> J Reeves, Canterbury, 27 November 1989.
- <sup>8</sup> *Age*, 14 November 1941.
- <sup>9</sup> *Camberwell Free Press*, 13 March 1968, *The Age*, 1 April and 27 March 1987, *My Gorgeous Life*, pp 193, 212 and "A funny thing happened to Australian Comedy", Channel 10, 13 November 1989.
- <sup>10</sup> Barry Humphries, "An ode to the City of Camberwell", *Camberwell Free Press*, 13 March 1968.
- <sup>11</sup> A copy of the script is kept in the CLHC, F 82 Thea.
- <sup>12</sup> 15 September 1928.
- <sup>13</sup> 28 August 1930.
- <sup>14</sup> *Melbourne Herald*, 21 March 1932.
- <sup>15</sup> City of Camberwell, Miscellaneous Letters, 1924/25 Town Clerk to AS Ward, 16 August 1924.
- <sup>16</sup> *Age*, 15 September 1928.
- <sup>17</sup> *Balwyn 1841-1941*, ps 5, 22.
- <sup>18</sup> *Advertiser*, 22 June and *Standard*, 27 October 1889.
- <sup>19</sup> *Age* and *Argus*, 11 April 1933.
- <sup>20</sup> An impression gained from interviews with members; interviews 27 November 1989 and from notes on "Historic recollections", Burwood history group meetings and recent issues of the *Burwood Bulletin*.
- <sup>21</sup> Malcolm Shore and Joellene Campbell, Executive Officers for the Alamein Community Committee.
- <sup>22</sup> Interviews with residents and former tenants Jan-Feb 1990.
- <sup>23</sup> LR Evans, "An historical geography of Surrey Hills", BA thesis, Melbourne University, 1978 p 35.
- <sup>24</sup> "Surrey Hills: In celebration of the centennial 1883-1983", Surrey Hills 1983.
- <sup>25</sup> Also noted by Evans, "Surrey Hills", p 64.
- <sup>26</sup> In the following pages, extracts taken from the interviews with local residents at the Camberwell history group meeting, 21 November, at Surrey Hills before the parade, 25 November and at the Canterbury history group meeting 27 November 1989 are quoted.
- <sup>27</sup> C Morrison, "Early history of Canterbury" and letters to the editor, *The Canterbury Advertiser*, 7 November 1934.
- <sup>28</sup> "Our new suburbs", in Priestley, *Making their Mark*, p 155.
- <sup>29</sup> G McWilliam, "Reminiscences", 16 November 1981.
- <sup>30</sup> McCalman, *Struggletown*, ps 125, 261-2.
- <sup>31</sup> As discussed in Priestley, *Making their Mark*, pp 260-1.
- <sup>32</sup> *Camberwell City News*, December 1989, p 1.
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■ 9.2 Infant Welfare Centre; Alamein 1955



■ 9.3 Isabel Younger Ross Centre



## Chapter Nine

# SHIRE TO CITY

In 1887 an *Age* correspondent reported on a journey through the new suburb of Camberwell. On reaching "Camberwell itself [he found] the builder hard at work rearing up residences of all descriptions and throwing into the shade the out-of-date humpies".<sup>1</sup> A railway extended across Burke Rd and brought the home-buyer as well as the builder to Camberwell. Already real estate agents like the city firms of Thomas Sweetnam had opened offices on the Burke Rd hill.<sup>2</sup> They began to carve up the meadows and orchards, turning the countryside of Boroondara into the suburb of Camberwell.

The journalist had caught Camberwell at an historical turning point. Up until the end of the 1880s, farmers settled in Boroondara.<sup>3</sup> Amongst their small farms and a scattering of villages stood the occasional mansion of some city gentleman. But from the end of the 1880s Camberwell farmland and the grounds of these estates were cut into suburban blocks. The land boomers, land investors and home-seekers had reached Boroondara.

Elsewhere rural Boroondara survived into the 1890s. The *Victorian Municipal Directory* portrayed Boroondara as "picturesque and undulating", with a few small settlements. In the centre of the shire, a visitor came to Surrey Hills. Though it still had less than 200 residents, the municipal directory of 1891 described Surrey Hills as a place with three churches and a school. More importantly Surrey Hills seemed "very suitable for suburban villa residences . . . the land is cut up into allotments and is being rapidly built upon". North Balwyn in 1891 consisted of 1500 residents grouped around two churches and a state school. To the south a traveller came to three smaller settlements; Hartwell boasted a post office, an hotel and more than one hundred residents. From there a horse bus ran east to Burwood (Ballyshanassy) where a police station, rechabite hall, two churches and more than 200 people marked the shire boundary. South from Hartwell and overlooking the valley of the Gardiner's Creek stood Glen Iris a church, state school and 173 people, a place "most frequented by picnic parties".<sup>4</sup>

Boroondara remained, especially in those parts away from the one railway line, an agricultural place. The *Age* writer who had so enthusiastically described the builder's progress in Camberwell still saw much of the shire as a romantic pastoral refuge. He recollected a scene along one of the shire roadways where he chanced upon:

*acres of orchards where the blossoms are flying in the wind like hyacinth in full bloom, showing through a hedge on Camberwell road . . . among the trees a lady sketcher sitting in the fork of a log is drawing a little low-roofed, creeper-covered cottage.*

Over the last hundred years most traces of rural Boroondara have vanished and can never be recovered. Yet the pattern of streets, railways and tram routes, the styles of houses and their clustering in harmonious estates mark the emergence of a suburb from the bush. Hyacinth no longer blows along Camberwell Rd, but Camberwell's parks, gardens and street trees still suggest rural calm.

A walk along Burke Rd to Camberwell station nowadays takes a visitor past some Victorian shops but there are many more from the 1920s and later. Decorators have replaced older shop fronts and builders have hung new facades across the older frames of upper storeys. Bright illuminated signs with modern fonts jut out at right angles to buildings breaking up the older facades. Only near the station does the vista reflect the suburb created between the 1880s and the Second World War. Here asphalt and red-brick walkways angle down to the station and two-storey auction rooms and terrace houses rise above the station ramparts. To the east, red tiles, church spires and now and then a glass office block break through the treeline. Below them roads of concrete and asphalt lead into calm streets of solid homes set in gardens. On the northern and southern borders of Camberwell, freeways and cars curve along watercourses. Instead of the occasional rattle of a train or the tap of a builder's hammer or the reassuring sounds of farm life, streets like Burke Rd are filled with the din of cars and trucks.

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Life is different in Camberwell today (*"No tradesmen trudge from door to door;/ When I was young a Chink with vedges/ A bicycling Russian trimmed the hedges/ And I recall an ice-cream cart well-/ And matinees at the Regal Hartwell"*).<sup>5</sup>

This Camberwell has largely vanished. But, even today, away from main roads, it is a silent place. Calm, quiet and orderly it is still the same suburb which attracted homebuyers in Melbourne's recurrent land booms. Cities are constantly changing, and metropolitan Melbourne, especially in middle-ring suburbs like Camberwell, cannot ignore the urban designs of the late-twentieth century. By understanding its past, we can protect the essential character of a place despite new buildings and changing functions. This environmental history has been presented as a step towards maintaining the distinctive historical character of Camberwell.

<sup>1</sup> *Age*, 10 September 1897.

<sup>2</sup> The estate agent, Sweetnam built one of the first suburban houses in Surrey Hills in Thistle St, Surrey Hills in 1875.

<sup>3</sup> At the *Victorian Census* of 1861 over one hundred residents in the Boroondara Road District reported themselves as farmers and 127 as farm servants. The next largest group were woodsplitters, carters, fencers, grubbers etc., 51 in all; *Census of Victoria*, 1861.

<sup>4</sup> *Victorian municipal directory*, 1891.

<sup>5</sup> Humphries, "An ode the the City of Camberwell"

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## APPENDIX

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### Initial Guidelines for the identification, management and interpretation of historical fabric.

#### ■ PURPOSE

The purpose of the preceding history is to aid in the process of conservation in Camberwell. By isolating key themes in the history of the suburb we can make a more informed decision about the identification of places for either local planning protection or nomination to the Historic Buildings Register and the Register of the National Estate. The themes discussed here assist us in interpreting places in Camberwell and managing them in the future. This Appendix presents guidelines which can assist in finding the correct historical context for identifying, interpreting and managing buildings and areas. This is not intended to pre-empt architectural or urban design analysis and interpretation of the municipality's structures. It is presented rather as a first step towards incorporating historically-important places in any future conservation controls; places which might otherwise not strike immediate attention from urban design perspectives.

#### ■ GENERAL METHOD

The history isolated key historical **themes**. Areas and buildings identified with each of these themes need to be selected in any subsequent survey of the municipality. In addition the homes and workplaces of **prominent individuals** also came to light; these need to be assessed. Thirdly there are many buildings which have a **social significance**; they are identified closely with local social activities and people's perceptions of what is distinctive about the suburb. Finally there are **landforms and patterns** which although not distinctive in themselves, when taken together or related to one another define the urban form of the municipality. The following specific guidelines for identification, management and interpretation indicate places considered significant on the basis of the history and representative types of buildings to be selected in architectural survey work.

#### ■ THEMATIC SITES

By identifying buildings with important themes in the history of Camberwell we can isolate those which provide the most readily-interpreted indicators of historical processes. Key themes for which representative types can be selected are as follows

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**■ Domestic architecture:**

- by period: pre-1880; 1880-1890; 1890-1900; 1900-1920; 1920-1929; 1930-1945; post-war
- by form and scale; mansion; villa; bungalow; single-storey; double-storey; additional form from architectural survey
- by materials; brick/stone; timber; concrete; fibro; other
- by style and function; Victorian, Federation and Edwardian; bungalow; neo-Tudor; moderne; Californian; Meso-American; prairie; post-war styles; other identified in architectural survey
- by agency; individual builders; state bank; war services home commission; Housing Commission of Victoria; other; owner-builder; by prominent architect; representative of styles of re-modelling; intact gardens.

**■ Commercial building:**

- by date; early buildings identified; representative examples of later periods
- by landmark importance (McAlpine's)
- by function; manufacturing; Rook's carriageworks; Golding's Hall; other industrial if located.

**■ Transport:**

- Railway structures; surviving Outer Circle stations, signalling etc; Camberwell stations and surrounds; Outer Circle route; tramway architecture if surviving; items relating to motor car if located un architectural survey.

**■ Parks and Gardens, Street plantings:**

- Street trees identified by age and type; elm, plane trees; street plantings pre-1914 species to be protected; pre-1939; later post-war; gardens, especially ornamental gardens; Canterbury and Surrey in particular; special sites, Maranoa Gardens and Beckett Park.
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## ■ INDIVIDUALS

The draft report listed key individuals in Camberwell before and during the Second World War. It is not suggested that this list is exhaustive; nevertheless it provides a basis for identifying places associated with significant figures in Camberwell; sites associated with the following individuals can be identified; the names with (\*) marked are considered of state or national importance and so their homes if relatively intact ought to be considered for the Register of Historic Buildings or the Register of the National Estate.

|                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Albiston, Rev W      | Gilpin, O          |
| Armour, Rev J*       | Golding, A         |
| Baillieu, WL*        | Gooch, G           |
| Baillieu, AS         | Holland, H         |
| Bell, W MCM*         | Humphries, B*      |
| Bedggood, J          | Hutchins, H        |
| Beckett, R           | Jackson, EC*       |
| Bennett, Maj Gen HG* | James, W           |
| Berg, A*             | Jenkin, E*         |
| Blanksby, W          | Maling, JB         |
| Bryant, CEW*         | Mattingly, AH*     |
| Caldwell, Z*         | Murdoch family*    |
| Cameron, WJ          | Murray, A*         |
| Carter, E            | Newnham, W         |
| Chandler, RS*        | Noble, K*          |
| Chisholm, RS         | O'Shanassy, Sir J* |
| Coghill, G           | Rennick, F*        |
| Cumming, JB*         | Smith, JAB*        |
| Danks, Sir A*        | Southall, I*       |
| Derham, TP*          | Sweet, G*          |
| Eagleson, J*         | Syme, DY*          |
| Eggleston, AS*       | Taylor, AB         |
| Frederick, Rev H*J   | Wiedemann, SA      |
| Garrett, Brig AR*    |                    |

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## ■ SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

A large number of institutional buildings, communal buildings and landmarks of local significance came to light in the study. To date, the significance of all of these buildings seems to be local only, however in the course of architectural analysis, more material may come to light which would indicate that these could be recommended to state and national registers. Principal buildings of this kind are **churches, schools, club-rooms and halls.**

**Churches:** It seems invidious at this stage to indicate particular churches as having greater historical significance. The only grounds on which this could be done at present would be to isolate the first churches in the municipality; divided by denomination. A more systematic approach would require identifying buildings by age, style, denomination. The buildings can be grouped into pre-1880; 1880-1900; 1900-1945 and post-war, then by denomination and style. Representative examples can be identified after architectural analysis. A second important element of the churches is their landmark quality. Significant local landmarks can be flagged in architectural survey.

**Schools:** again with schools, a selection of particular buildings at this stage would be to pre-empt architectural analysis. Schools, especially private schools need to be investigated as groups of buildings which have altered in form and function over time. The state schools can be compared by age, by stage in the educational system in which they were built and by style. Once again representative examples can be chosen after architectural analysis.

**Significant halls and community buildings:** have been identified in the text. Of considerable local significance are the following: Burwood Mechanic's Institute; Atheneum Hall, Burwood, Canterbury Memorial Hall; sports ground buildings, Camberwell; original Camberwell baths (Riversdale); surviving scout halls and sports pavilions from inter-war Camberwell are all of local significance. Most evidence points to the parks and gardens as key sites of continuing social significance; especially structures within parks in Canterbury (former library) Beckett Park and Surrey Gardens. Other surviving buildings of social significance are represented by the former Holland picture theatre (Cole's Burke Rd) Balwyn cinema and former hotels; especially Malone's Canterbury.

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## ■ LANDFORMS (AREAS)

Camberwell is distinguished by several precincts of homogeneous buildings, some of varied buildings but with unifying themes and by landform elements which have shaped the historical contours of growth in the suburb. Principal amongst these are **housing estates** representing distinct eras and styles of subdivision and **commercial precincts**.

**Housing estates:** at this stage seem worthy of local rather than state protection although architectural analysis may indicate otherwise. As well as identifying areas which "express a period" architectural analysis ought to select areas which best express change over time; areas where the style of house captures the process of building change in Camberwell over the last one hundred years.

## ■ MANAGEMENT

**Structures:** Since so many diverse areas exist in Camberwell management of selected sites ought to proceed through (1) local advisory committees based on active community groups, in particular historical societies; (2) overall heritage and architectural advice for the City as a whole; (3) nomination to state and national registers.

**Goals:** The aim of identification and management is to protect historic fabric. Planning controls ought to be overseen by local committees, a heritage adviser in association with planning staff, local and state; from an historical point of view protection and interpretation take precedence over enhancement.

**Specific guidelines:** Two techniques are available for existing buildings (1) to revert to original state or to allow for (2) addition and alteration which does not reduce the existing historical interest of the site or area. The specific elements of such guidelines cannot be determined until Part 2 of the conservation study nears completion.

However from an historical viewpoint, the principal aim of conservation is to ensure the survival of the historical message of the structures or, in areas, the relationships between structures. This generally means allowing for limited alterations especially in areas where buildings do not date from the one era. Restoration to a period style ought to be restricted to areas with a dominant period style already; in Camberwell this may not be the case for many potential conservation areas.

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In the case of natural plantings the dominant characteristic ought to be enhanced. Parks and gardens have altered since their creation and continued alteration ought to be allowed. However in surviving areas imported street trees, especially the oak, plane and elm streets, steps must be taken to ensure the survival of the character of these streets by continued plantings.

## ■ INTERPRETATION

Since Camberwell is such a diverse area and since so many of the uniform period areas are of recent vintage, equally important as planning controls is public involvement and education in conservation.

A high priority ought to be a systematic approach to public education and participation. Steps must include (1) provision of written and graphic material on local areas and particular buildings; (2) a general publication summarising the Conservation Study and available for purchase; (3) contact with owners of identified buildings (4) special heritage events involving ratepayers and community groups (5) approaches to schools and future research on buildings as school projects (6) heritage competition, not just in restoration of buildings but in photographic, written and other interpretations of the built environment; (7) wider publicity for the character of Camberwell (through metropolitan media).

These are urgent and ideally ought to have begun before planning controls are implemented.

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